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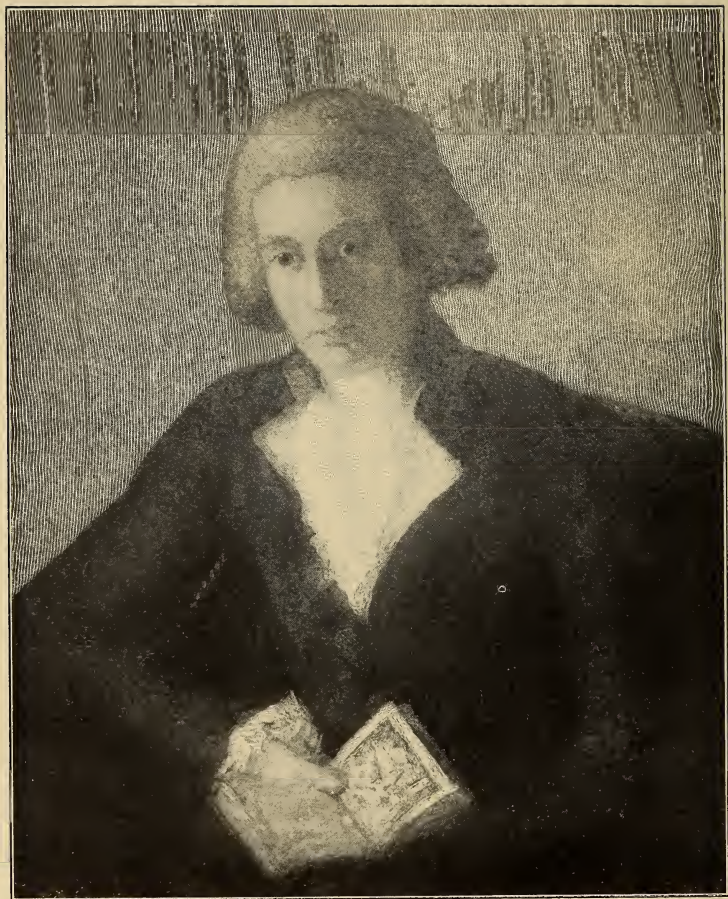
THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
LAURENCE STERNE



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Laurence Sterne

From a painting by Gainsborough in the Salford Art Galleries

The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne

By

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[illegible]

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PREFACE

THIS book aims to present, within reasonable compass, the personal history of Laurence Sterne, along with some account of the numerous men and women with whom he associated at home and abroad. Hence it has been called, after an old fashion for similar biographies, "The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne".

The title-page should be sufficient warning to the reader not to expect here a series of essays on the different aspects of Sterne's humour, or elaborate comparisons between Sterne and the humourists before and since his time. Masterly disquisitions of this kind we have already from Bagehot, Traill, and Watts-Dunton, not to mention briefer critical opinions from Thackeray, Coleridge, and Carlyle. My main purpose has been biographical. The questions ever before me have been: What sort of man was Sterne? How did he conduct himself in the days of his obscurity and after he had come into his fame? What did he do and what did he say? What books did he read? What were his pastimes? and what were his pleasures? Who were his friends? and who were his enemies, if he had any? And what did they say or think of him? In a word, wherein lay the secret of the man whose speech and conduct filled the imaginations of all who knew him intimately, whether at York, London, or Paris? These questions, forsooth, would be without much interest, as Nepos once remarked in a similar case, were not Sterne the author of two books which give him a large place in modern literature, perhaps by the side of Rabelais and Cervantes. Certainly the publication of *Tristram Shandy* and of the *Sentimental Journey* must be kept in mind as the great incidents in Sterne's life. Towards them and his other works must converge all personal details. It is only because of these books that a biographer can surely count upon a curiosity to know something about the personality of him who wrote them. But if it turns out, as it will, that *Tristram Shandy* and the

Sentimental Journey are in part autobiography, and that their author was as strange a compound of whims as are they, then new points of vantage may be gained for viewing and judging Sterne stage by stage in his career, and for presenting a final portrait of the man in relation to his works.

The materials for a life of Sterne, though not abundant, are quite adequate at most points. For his childhood, we have the memoirs which he wrote out for his daughter just before his death. For the period covering his life as Prebendary of York and Vicar of Sutton, we have a series of letters to a friend; a long letter to his uncle, amounting almost to an autobiography; a body of anecdotes collected by one who, as a boy, tagged at his heels and listened to his jests by the fireside after supper; and a series of local pamphlets in an amusing warfare to which the Yorkshire parson contributed the chief merriment. For Sterne in his fame, we have nearly two hundred letters to various friends; many references to him in the newspapers and in contemporary memoirs and correspondence; a journal extending over six important months of the year before his death; and the observations of a French Academician, who closely watched him in and out of the Parisian salons, conversed with him on various occasions, and wrote down his impressions of the Chevalier Sterne. Finally, there are the portraits of Sterne by the great painters of the age, who invited him to their tables, studied him there under the most favourable conditions, and asked him to sit to them the next morning.

Nevertheless a life of Sterne has proved no easy task for several reasons. In the first place it has been a slow process to collect materials which lie dispersed in many books, documents, and manuscripts. True, this work had been performed to some extent by others; but the current biography of Sterne in two volumes is so untrustworthy in all details, that any reliance upon it would have meant disaster. The sketch of Sterne by Mr. Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is admirable in those parts for which the author consulted manuscripts near at hand, but it suffers elsewhere from a repetition of old errors, which, once in print,

seem destined to thrive forever. It would, however, be ungenerous not to acknowledge many obligations to all who have written upon Sterne since the time of Scott. Without the aid of Mr. Lee's excellent bibliography, my undertaking, difficult as it has been, would have been much more difficult.

Again, the question how far *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey* are a rendering of actual incidents in Sterne's personal history must be always present, though it can never be quite answered; for all that a biographer can expect is corroborative evidence here and there from external sources. Whether he goes right or wrong in his inferences from such facts as are at his command, depends partly upon his judgment, and partly upon his conception of Sterne's character, which may be either true or false. No one can ever feel quite sure of himself in dealing with these apparent correspondences. He knows that incidents in Sterne's life, all the way from boyhood down to near death, are in Sterne's books; but he knows also that they are entangled with much that is extraneous. The cautious and yet very large use that I have made of *Tristram Shandy* and of the *Sentimental Journey* will appear justified, I trust, in the course of the narrative.

Moreover, Sterne's correspondence, upon which a biographer must mainly depend, has survived in a wretched condition. The early collections of his letters contain forgeries which must be sifted out. In letters for the most part genuine, passages have been suppressed and replaced by new ones. Names of correspondents and of persons mentioned within the letters are commonly indicated by an initial or two; and at times there is no clue to them at all, unless one may read a line of stars into a name. In a similar but not identical fashion, Sterne's correspondence as published in later times has been interpolated or modified in phrasing, apparently in order to make out of the humourist a man more reckless in his speech than he really was, to give piquancy, as it were, to his character, as if it needed any. Were there space here, it would be interesting to illustrate in detail how this has been done. A passage, for example, in one of the letters to the Rev. John Blake was deleted by the editor of the series, and

compensation was made for the loss by inserting a phrase which does not occur anywhere in the original. In other cases, a letter in its published form may be quite at variance with the manuscript. Soon after reaching London in 1760, Sterne wrote, for instance, a gay note to Richard Berenger, master of horse to George the Third, requesting that he ride out to Leicester Fields and ask Hogarth for a frontispiece to the new edition of *Tristram Shandy*. The following is the letter as Sterne copied it into his Letter-Book* for preservation:

“My dear Berenger,

“You bid me tell you all my wants——what the duce can the man want now? what would I not give to have but ten strokes of Howgarth’s witty chissel at the front of my next Edition of *Tristram Shandy* [the Vanity of a pretty woman in the hey-day of her Triumphs, is a Fool to the vanity of a successful author——*orna me*, sigh’d Swift to Pope,——unite something of yours to mine to wind us together in one sheet down to posterity——I will, I will; said Pope——but you dont do it enough said Swift——

“Now the loosest Sketch in nature of Trim’s reading the sermon to my father & my uncle Toby will content me——

“I would hold out my lank purse—I would shut my eyes —& you should put your hand into it & take out what [you] liked for it——Blockhead! this gift is not bought with money——perish thee & thy gold with thee.

“What shall we do? I would not propose a disagreeable thing to one I so much admire, for the whole world:——You are a hard faced, impudent, honest dog——prithee stop & *sans menagement*, begin thus,

“ ‘Mr. Hogarth, my friend Shandy’——but go on your own way——as I shall do mine, all my Life,

“So adieu.”

After lying hidden for more than a century, the letter appeared in Mr. Percy Fitzgerald’s *Life of Sterne*,† expanded and ornamented to read as follows:

* *Morgan Manuscripts*.

† Vol. I. 160-61 (London, 1896).

“You bid me tell you all my wants. What the Devil in Hell can a fellow want now? By the Father of the Sciences (you know his name) I would give both my ears (if I was not to lose my credit by it) for no more than ten strokes of Howgarth’s witty chisel, to clap at the Front of my next Edition of *Shandy*. The Vanity of a Pretty Girl in the Heyday of her Roses & Lilies is a fool to that of Author of my stamp. Oft did Swift sigh to Pope in these words: ‘Orna me, unite something of yours to mine, to transmit us down together hand in hand to futurity.’ The loosest sketch in Nature, of Trim’s reading the sermon to my Father, &c., wd do the Business, and it wd mutually illustrate his System and mine. But, my dear Shandy, with what face I would hold out my lank Purse! I would shut my Eyes, & you should put in your hand and take out what you liked for it. Ignoramus! Fool! Blockhead! Symoniack! This Grace is not to be bought with money. Perish thee and thy Gold with thee! What shall we do? I have the worst face in the world to ask a favour with, & besides, I would not propose a disagreeable thing to one I so much admire for the whole world; but you can say anything—you are an impudent, honest Dog, & can’t set a face upon a bad matter; prithee sally out to Leicester fields, & when you have knock’d at the door (for you must knock first) and art got in, begin thus: ‘Mr. Hogarth, I have been with my friend Shandy this morning;’ but go on yr own way, as I shall do mine. I esteem you, & am, my dear Mentor, Yrs most Shandascally, L. Sterne.”

Two versions of the same letter differing so greatly as these, are very perplexing as well as very amusing. Did Sterne, in copying out the letter, tone it down? or has the original manuscript been expanded and vulgarised by other hands? These questions could be answered only by an inspection of the manuscript which Mr. Fitzgerald derived from a source not mentioned in his *Life of Sterne*. As the safer way, it has been my custom, in all doubtful cases, to quote from an autograph manuscript, even though it may not represent the letter as it actually passed through the post.

It is hardly necessary to say that I can have no motive for representing Sterne otherwise than in the habit as he

lived. Had I any motive to the contrary, I should be disarmed by the humourist himself, who said famously: "If the characters of past ages and men are to be drawn at all, they should be drawn like themselves; that is with their excellencies, and with their foibles." I have not spared Sterne nor have I idealised him. That the truth might be told, whether it be for or against his character, I have examined all available manuscripts which have come to my knowledge. The largest single collection is at the British Museum, whose officers have granted me the usual privileges for having them copied or photographed. The story of Mrs. Draper's life and of her friendship with Sterne was rendered possible only by the courtesy of Lord Basing, who placed at my disposal Mrs. Draper's unpublished correspondence and other documents preserved at Hoddington. A part of the Letter-Book in which Sterne copied out letters which he particularly liked, whether his own or from his friends, has been recently acquired by J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq., who generously gave me access to it. This old book, besides containing several interesting letters which have never been published, proved the authenticity of more than thirty other letters long supposed to be forgeries. The originals or copies of one or more letters were also supplied by Mr. Alfred Huth of London, Mr. A. H. Joline of New York City, Mr. W. K. Bixby of St. Louis, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons and Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., of New York City, and Messrs. Robson and Co. and Messrs. Henry Sotheran and Co., of London. In quoting from these and other private manuscripts, I have aimed to keep well within the bounds set by their owners. All excerpts from original letters have been printed as Sterne or Mrs. Draper wrote them, save that numerals and abbreviations have been written out in full, and occasional changes have been made in capitals and punctuation where the one or the other appeared very awkward or very obscure. In all this, I have remembered, though I could not always follow it to the letter, Sterne's injunction to his printer: "That, at your peril, you do not presume to alter or transpose one Word, nor rectify one false Spelling, nor so much as add or diminish one Comma or Tittle".

Underlying this account of the humourist's life, especially of his life in the north, is information derived from local records and newspapers. The Institutions of the Diocese of York and the Act Book of the Dean and Chapter not only shed light upon the details of Sterne's ecclesiastical appointments, but they also serve to identify many of his friends at York. The parish book at Sutton is curious for its Shandean entries; and the memorials of deeds in the Registry Office at Northallerton reveal Sterne's dealings in land. In this connection, I have to thank especially the Rev. Canon Watson of the Minster Library, by whose aid was discovered the first edition of Sterne's *Political Romance*. The library contains also many local pamphlets indispensable to the biographer, and a file of the *York Courant*, covering nearly the entire period of Sterne's active life. I should not forget, too, for their assistance, Dr. George A. Auden, of Birmingham, Mr. A. H. Hudson, Registrar of the Diocese of York, the late T. B. Whytehead, Clerk of the Dean and Chapter, and Mr. William Brown, F.S.A., of Thirsk, with his exact knowledge of local conditions in the eighteenth century. I am indebted to Mr. W. W. Smith of Lincoln for Sterne's appointment to St. Ives, as recorded in the Act Book of the Bishop of Lincoln, and to Mr. Edwin Abbott, Librarian of Jesus College, for all entries relative to Sterne in the college register.

It has been a part of my plan to bring together all the great portraits of Sterne and to make selections from the most interesting among the rest. Such a collection would have been impossible but for the courtesy of the owners of the original paintings. Lord Lansdowne granted permission to photograph the painting by Reynolds at Lansdowne House. It is a soberer face than that of any of the engravings after the portrait, which are really caricatures of Sterne. The Earl of Yarborough likewise gave permission to reproduce the bust in terra-cotta executed by Nollekens when Sterne, was at Rome; but at the last moment it became necessary to employ for this purpose a photograph of the marble replica at Skelton Castle. The portrait after Gainsborough has been made directly from the original painting in the Art

Galleries of the Peel Park Museum at Salford, by permission of the Corporation. This beautiful painting, in which Sterne appears dressed in the height of fashion, has never before been engraved. Nor is any engraving known to exist of the youthful portrait by Ramsay in the Hall of Jesus College, Cambridge, which is reproduced here by permission of the Master and Fellows.

No less interesting is Sterne as he appeared to a Frenchman, in the water-colour by Carmontelle, now in the collection of the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly. It has been reproduced for this book after an especially fine engraving made in 1890 by Messrs. Colnaghi and Company of London. A print of the curious caricature of Sterne by Thomas Bridges of York, the original of which is either lost or carefully kept from the public, was supplied by Dr. George A. Auden of Birmingham. To make the list complete, I should mention two other portraits of Sterne in the eighteenth century,—one by Napoleon Thomas and the other by Hopkins. The former was engraved by Ferdinand and the latter by Heath. Neither portrait, however, adds anything to our knowledge of Sterne's appearance, for both Thomas and Hopkins were born too late to have any personal acquaintance with the humourist. In the text I have also described a second and almost unknown portrait by Reynolds. It is in no way comparable with the painter's masterpiece, and for that reason it has not been included among the illustrations of this work. The engraving of Hall-Stevenson—Sterne's other self—has been made from a photograph of a very fine portrait, which was sent me by W. H. A. Wharton, Esq., of Skelton Castle.

A descriptive bibliography of Sterne's manuscripts and published works will be found in the Appendix.

In conclusion, I have to thank Miss E. J. Hastings of London for her faithful and most intelligent aid while collecting material for this book. The proofs have been kindly read by Mr. Andrew Keogh of Yale University Library.

March 18, 1909.

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. Birth and Education..... | 3 |
| II. Marriage and Settlement at Sutton-on-the-Forest..... | 36 |
| III. Politics and Honours..... | 67 |
| IV. Quarrel with his Uncle..... | 87 |
| V. Pastimes and Friendships | 104 |
| VI. The Parson in his Library..... | 130 |
| VII. A Good Warm Watch-Coat..... | 153 |
| VIII. The Publication of Tristram Shandy: Volumes I and II... | 178 |
| IX. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick..... | 210 |
| X. Shandy Hall. Tristram Shandy: Volumes III and IV... | 233 |
| XI. Shandy Hall Continued. Tristram Shandy: Volumes V and VI | 257 |
| XII. Paris | 271 |
| XIII. Journey to Toulouse..... | 293 |
| XIV. A Gentleman of France..... | 308 |
| XV. Yorkshire and London. Tristram Shandy: Volumes VII and VIII | 330 |
| XVI. Yorkshire and London Continued. Sermons: Volumes III and IV | 344 |
| XVII. The Tour of Italy..... | 360 |
| XVIII. The Last Volume of Tristram Shandy..... | 386 |
| XIX. The Journal to Eliza..... | 403 |
| XX. The Sentimental Journey..... | 433 |
| XXI. Illness and Death..... | 456 |
| XXII. Lydia and her Mother. Posthumous Sermons and Letters | 470 |
| XXIII. Mrs. Draper | 496 |
| Conclusion | 511 |
| Appendix | 524 |
| Index | 539 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| | TO FACE PAGE |
|---|----------------|
| Laurence Sterne | Frontispiece ✓ |
| From a painting by Gainsborough in the Salford Art Galleries. | |
| Laurence Sterne | 36 ✓ |
| From a painting by Ramsay at Jesus College, Cambridge. | |
| Thomas Bridges and Laurence Sterne..... | 104 ✓ |
| Skelton Castle | 130 ✓ |
| From the frontispiece to Crazy Tales. | |
| Laurence Sterne | 210 ✓ |
| From a painting by Reynolds at Lansdowne House. | |
| Laurence Sterne | 288 ✓ |
| From a water colour by Carmontelle at Chantilly. | |
| Laurence Sterne | 381 ✓ |
| From the replica of a bust by Nollekens at Skelton Castle. | |
| John Hall-Stevenson | 470 ✓ |
| From a painting at Skelton Castle. | |

THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
LAURENCE STERNE

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND EDUCATION

1713-1736

THE great humourist whose life I have undertaken to relate anew, would have been amused by a serious attempt to discover him among his ancestors. Musty records preserved religiously by his Yorkshire neighbours, that they might the more readily boast the achievements of a great-grandfather, interested him, it is true, greatly; but only because they furnished matter for jest. His *Tristram Shandy* is, as all readers of it know, a burlesque history of a typical English family (much like Sterne's own) that gained its rank in the time of Henry the Eighth, and subsequently sank under the disgrace of flat noses and inauspicious names. The Shandys could claim in the sixteenth century, says Sterne with near reference to himself, "no less than a dozen alchemists," whose souls passed on, a century or two later, into an archbishop, a Welsh judge, "some three or four aldermen", and eventually into a mountebank. His more ideal self, which bears the name of Parson Yorick, the humourist aptly derived in direct line from Shakespeare's Yorick of Denmark, whose "flashes of merriment were wont to set the table on a roar" far back in the days of the good King Hamlet. Despite this raillery of himself as akin to the old alchemists and court jesters, Sterne was glad enough to count among his ancestors an Archbishop of York and a succession of country gentlemen since the fifteenth century. Long annoyed by scribblers' tales about his early life and whence he came, he set down, some six months before his death, certain particulars of family history and of his boyhood for his daughter Lydia, "in case hereafter she should have a curiosity or a kinder motive to know them".

It may well be that Danish blood really flowed in Sterne's

veins as well as in the imaginary Yorick's; for the family to which he belonged sprang from the yeomanry and minor gentry of old East Anglia—Norfolk and Suffolk—and the border shires where the Danes settled in great numbers. Thence various members of the family migrated to the north until Yorkshire became their chief home, while others settled in Ireland, establishing there a collateral branch, which included John Sterne (1624-1669), the founder of the Irish College of Physicians at Dublin, and his son, likewise named John (1660-1745), who became in turn Dean of St. Patrick's and Bishop of Clogher. The latter figures in literary history as an intimate friend of Swift and Stella, whom he entertained with profuse hospitality. The more learned of the family evidently associated their name with the old English word *stearn*, dialectical *starn* to this day, signifying a *starling*; for as soon as they rose to rank and wealth, their arms appeared, with some variation, as "gold, a chevron engrailed between three crosses flory sable, surmounted with a starling in proper colours for a crest". That starling, made captive, it will be remembered, was long afterwards brought into the *Sentimental Journey* as the motive for a pathetic discourse on the bitterness of slavery.

Laurence Sterne, the subject of this biography, was in direct descent from William Sterne, who was living towards the close of Elizabeth's reign at Cropwell-Butler, a village and manor to the south of Bingham in Nottinghamshire. William Sterne was in turn lineally descended, as his arms clearly indicate, from the Sternes that had been long seated near Cambridge, first at Stapleford and afterwards at Stowcum-Quy, whence issued also the Sternes in Ireland. Remoter ancestry of the family points especially to the Sternes who by marriage with the Gambons came into possession of Whitwell Hall in Norfolk under the Lancastrian kings. A son of the William Sterne aforementioned, named Simon, settled at Mansfield, "a flourishing and genteel market town" some miles to the north of Cropwell-Butler, where he married Margery, daughter of Gregory Walker and widow of one Charles Cartwright. Of the marriage was born, in or near

1596, Richard Sterne, who, becoming Archbishop of York, was the first to give distinction to the family name.

This Richard Sterne, great-grandfather of the humourist, was a man who combined shrewd intelligence with that energy necessary for making one's way in the world. As a boy "two remarkable deliverances" were related of him by the old story-tellers. He fell into a sluice which carried him beneath a mill-wheel, and tumbled from a church-steeple where he was playing at see-saw with another boy; but in both cases he escaped unharmed under the guidance of "a gracious Providence". He attended the free school at Mansfield, whence he passed, at the age of fifteen, to Trinity College, Cambridge. After taking the usual degrees in arts, he was elected Fellow of Corpus Christi, and for ten years thereafter "engaged in the instruction of pupils with credit both to himself and to the college". In the meantime, both of the great universities honoured him with degrees in divinity, and he became well known among ecclesiastics—the distinction seems rather grotesque—for a summary of "the 3600 faults in our printed Bibles", a feat in line with the labours of Scaliger and other learned classical scholars of the preceding generation who had awakened wonder by the multitude of errors which they were able to discover in ancient texts. Early in 1634, the Bishop of Ely, by direction of his Majesty, appointed him Master of Jesus College. To Sterne's prestige as teacher and scholar was now added that of an able administrator. By his efforts among the fellows and other friends, funds were raised for various purposes, but especially for building "the north side of the outer court" of Jesus College, which still stands "as a monument to his name".

The young Master of Jesus—not yet forty years old—was, as might be inferred from his position, a most ardent supporter of the existing order in church and state. Archbishop Laud summoned him to London and enrolled him among his chaplains, to say nothing of other substantial honours conferred upon him: all, doubtless, with a view to having at Cambridge an adherent who could be trusted to furnish full and accurate information concerning things

ecclesiastical. To King Charles and his agents who came frequently to Cambridge, Sterne was also equally loyal. In the summer of 1642, the king set up his standard at Nottingham and made ready for battle. At that juncture, Sterne joined with two other Cambridge masters in collecting and sending moneys and plate to his Majesty. Cromwell was on the watch, and though the treasure reached the king, the masters were surrounded while at prayers in their several chapels, and taken up to London; led captive, says the contemporary account, "through Bartholomew Fair, and so far as Temple Bar, and back through the city to prison in the Tower, on purpose that they might be hooted at or stoned by the rabble rout". During three years of imprisonment in various places, Sterne was subjected at times to barbarous usage, barely escaping transportation; but these were among common incidents of the Revolution, as was likewise his ejection from the mastership of Jesus College.

During this dark period Richard Sterne once stepped forth to the light to take part in a memorable scene. The Revolution was moving on swiftly. The king had been defeated at Marston Moor, and Laud was about to go the way of Strafford. Scant four days were given the archbishop to prepare for death. On Laud's petition to Parliament that one of his ancient chaplains might be sent to him to administer spiritual comfort, if he must die, Dr. Sterne was selected. Sterne was with his friend and patron during the last three days of his life, and attended him to the scaffold. After reading his last sermon and last public prayer, Laud turned toward the block, and, as he did so, he placed the manuscript in the hands of his chaplain, that the world might have true and faithful copies thereof. Liberated soon after this terrible event, Sterne passed many subsequent years in seclusion at Stevenage in Hertfordshire, where, save for a small pension from one of Laud's friends, he earned a livelihood by taking pupils. When Charles the Second returned to his own, Sterne was among the first to win preferment. A few months in his Cambridge mastership once more and three years Bishop of Carlisle, he was translated in the spring of 1664 to the archbishopric of York, where he sat until his

death on June 18, 1683. His body lies buried in the chapel of St. Stephen in his own cathedral at York. To his memory his grandson Richard erected a marble monument with a canopy, beneath which half reclines a mitred figure with the head resting upon one of the hands. A fine portrait of the archbishop in his splendid robes, a mezzotint by Francis Place of York, hangs near Cranmer's over the dais in the hall of Jesus College. With eyes curiously askance, the dignified prelate looks down the hall, past Coleridge, upon the youthful portrait of his great-grandson, as if in question whether he should own him.

It would be impossible to imagine the archbishop sitting down to *Gargantua* or *Pantagruel*, the nearest approach to *Tristram Shandy* in those days. His face, with no trace of humour in it, looks too serious for that. As a young man, this Richard Sterne wrote Latin verses and commented upon the Psalms. Later in life he bore a hand in Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible involving nine languages, and subsequently assisted in a revision of the Book of Common Prayer. After his death appeared a Latin treatise of his on logic, with illustrations drawn mostly from the Scriptures; and to him has been long attributed, though doubtfully, the authorship of *The Whole Duty of Man*. While Archbishop of York, he made many friends and many enemies. To those who agreed with him "he was a man of eminent worth and abilities". "He was", says a letter from York just after his death, "greatly respected and generally lamented. All the clergy commemorate his sweet condescensions, his free communications, faithful counsels, exemplary temperance, cheerful hospitality and bountiful charity".* On the other hand, Burnet regarded him as only "a sour, ill-tempered" ecclesiastic, who, after gaining the see of York, "minded chiefly the enriching of his family". As a politician, it is said further, he was more than ordinarily compliant in his last years to the Court and to the Duke of York; wherefore came the suspicion that he was at heart a Papist. Baxter, who clashed with him in

* Nicolson and Burn, *History of Antiquities of Westmoreland and Cumberland*, II, 290 (London, 1777). In contrast, see Burnet, *History of his own Times*, II, 208 (London, 1818); and *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part II, 338 (London, 1696).

debate at the Savoy Conference over a reformed liturgy, was surprised to find deceit concealed by a face that "look'd so honestly and gravely and soberly". Although these adverse opinions of two eminent divines were no doubt coloured by political and religious dislike, they nevertheless point to a truth. Richard Sterne was a conspicuous example among the clergy of the Restoration whose ideals of church dignity and ecclesiastical polity had been derived from Archbishop Laud. To the new age they appeared narrow and bigoted. Like his famous descendant, the archbishop was also irritable and hasty in temper, and prone to provoke a quarrel. Edward Rainbowe, who succeeded him at Carlisle, found the episcopal palace barely habitable and instituted a suit against him for dilapidations. While he held the see of York, Sterne certainly amassed a fortune, but not, as Burnet charges, wholly for his own benefit or that of his family. The archbishop's benefactions were numerous and liberal. From his own purse he contributed, for example, £1800 towards the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral after the great fire; and some years before his death he founded, by an annual rent charge of £60 on his manors in Yorkshire, six scholarships at Cambridge—four at Jesus College and two at Corpus Christi—for natives of Nottingham and Yorkshire. One of these scholarships was to come in the course of time to the author of *Tristram Shandy*.

The archbishop had married, sometime in middle life, a woman who was his junior by some years—Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Dickenson, lord of the manor of Farnborough, Hampshire, who bore him thirteen children. She died on March 6, 1673-4, at the age of fifty-eight, while on a visit to London, and was buried with her family at Farnborough. At his own death, ten years later, the archbishop divided his comfortable estates among his three surviving sons.* The eldest son Richard, to whom fell the largest share, married and took as his seat Kilvington Hall, near Thirsk and within the district where Laurence Sterne was eventually to hold several church livings. He was a justice of the peace and

* The will was signed and sealed on April 14, 1683.—Registry of Wills at York.

represented Ripon in one or more Parliaments under Charles the Second. Ralph Thoresby, the antiquary, who passed five days with him in the coach up to London, found him "very good company (not so hot as I feared, being the archbishop's son)".* William, the second son of the archbishop, besides inheriting "lands and tenements" at Ryther in the fertile valley of the Wharfe, was bequeathed five hundred pounds. He married Frances, daughter of William Cartwright of Normanton, and settled at Mansfield on the estate of his grandfather. The third son, known as Simon Sterne of Halifax, received by the terms of his father's will, in lieu of lands, five hundred pounds outright, three hundred pounds in East India stock, and a remission of his debts to the archbishop. This Simon Sterne of Halifax, who seems to have been improvident in his youth, was the grandfather of Laurence Sterne.

At this point another strain in the descent of the humourist becomes of especial interest. Simon Sterne married, to his great good fortune, Mary Jaques, heiress to a large estate at Elvington, near York on the river Derwent. Her grandfather, Sir Roger Jaques, was a prosperous merchant and alderman of York back in the time of the first Stuarts. A staunch loyalist in a city where the loyalists predominated, he rose, in 1639, to the honourable post of Lord Mayor, and was knighted in that year by King Charles while resting at York on his way north against the Scots. Roger Jaques had been aided, no doubt, in his career, gaining thereby social position as well as wealth, by marrying into the Rawdons, one of the oldest and richest of the northern families. The Mary Rawdon whose hand he succeeded in winning, was the daughter of a certain Laurence Rawdon, who settled at York during the last years of Elizabeth, and made a fortune in trade. Her brother was the Marmaduke Rawdon who wrote an agreeable account of travels in Britain and on the Continent.† In the glimpses given of her by Marmaduke in his book, Lady Jaques, as she was always called, appears as a

* Thoresby, *Diary*, I, 154 (London, 1830).

† *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon*, edited by Robert Davies for the Camden Society (London, 1863).

charming, well-bred woman, who was careful to live in accordance with her station. She goes up to London with her husband to see the "rarities", including a visit with a merry company to the Royal Sovereign, a big ship, newly built and lying down the river; they have an audience with the king and queen at Greenwich; and thoroughly tired out with a month's feasting among relatives and friends, Lady Jaques is glad to get back to Yorkshire once more. During her last years—she survived her husband—she passed her time between Elvington and her house on the Pavement, then one of the fashionable streets at York. She kept a coach and might be seen on a fine day taking the air in it, accompanied by a blackamoor running along by the side. It is altogether a delightful picture such as one ought to find somewhere among the ancestors of Laurence Sterne.

The Mary Jaques whom Simon Sterne married was the granddaughter of this genteel and vivacious Mary Rawdon. Her brother Roger dying without issue, she succeeded as his heir to the lordship of Elvington. With £1800 Simon Sterne purchased Woodhouse, a large estate at Skircoat to the southwest of Halifax, with an Elizabethan mansion looking across the beautiful valley of the Calder. Nothing very distinctive has been gleaned about him. He was a justice of the peace and governor of a charity for the poor of Halifax. He died at Woodhouse Hall, "having undergone a severe salivation for a cancer in the mouth", and was buried at Halifax on April 17, 1703. He left three sons and three daughters. To Richard, the eldest son, born in 1680, descended the estates at Elvington and Woodhouse. In the November following his father's death, Richard married Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Priestley of Halifax and widow of Samuel Lister of Shibden Hall, two miles to the northeast of Halifax, where he resided for several years. His first wife dying, he married in 1714 Esther, daughter and heiress of Mr. Timothy Booth of Halifax. Most fortunate in his marriages, he grew to be the wealthiest of the Sternes, possessing, besides his inherited estates, lands at Ovenden and Hipperholme. He bore the chief hand in reorganising the grammar school at Skircoat, of which the Archbishop of York appointed him one of the

governors. He was also a governor of a similar foundation at Hipperholme. Hot and litigious in temper, he became involved in several law suits and in a bitter quarrel with the vicar of his parish, who refused him the Sacrament. He died suddenly at Bradford on October 9, 1732, while on his way to York, and was buried at Halifax. He is the uncle who took in little Laurence at Woodhouse and sent him to school. The third son of Simon Sterne, named Jaques and born in 1695 or 1696, will enter these memoirs at a later stage, as the violent Precentor of York who first helped his nephew and then turned against him in great bitterness. Between Richard and Jaques, was born, about 1692, Roger Sterne, the father of the humourist.*

To Roger Sterne, as a younger brother, there were open three obvious careers. He might have married, like so many of his ancestors, an heiress and settled in Yorkshire as a country gentleman. He might have gone like his brother Jaques to the university, and have easily secured a place in the Church within the patronage of some relative or friend of the family. Finally there was the army. He chose the army as in more accord, no doubt, with a roving disposition. Among the crack regiments raised in 1702, on the outbreak of the war with France and Spain, known in history as the War of the Spanish Succession, was the Thirty-Fourth or the Cumberland Regiment of Foot. Its first colonel was Robert, Lord Lucas, and among the captains was Richard Steele, the wit and essayist. The men, as one may view them in old plates, made a smart appearance in their tri-cornered hats, long scarlet coats richly trimmed with yellow, and white gaiters reaching above the knees. Under their second colonel, Hans Hamilton, who succeeded Lord Lucas in 1705, they proved their mettle in Spain during and after the siege of Barcelona,

* The older pedigrees of the Sterne family have been corrected, revised, and enlarged in the *Publications of the Harleian Society*. See especially in this series *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, II, 516-17; the *Visitations of Norfolk in 1563 and 1613*; and the *Visitations of Cambridge in 1575 and 1619*. Miscellaneous information is to be found in the *Northowram or Coley Register*, edited by J. Horsfall Turner (London, 1881). None of the pedigrees give the date of birth for Roger Sterne; nor is it contained in the parish registers either at Halifax or Elvington.

where they were terribly cut up in a gallant charge against the French. With the prestige won in Spain, the regiment returned to England in 1707 to recruit; and the next year it was ordered north on the alarm of an invasion of Scotland by the French in favour of the Stuart Pretender. For several months the Thirty-Fourth was stationed at Leeds, and while there it may have gained, among its new recruits of 1708, Roger Sterne, then a mere stripling not more than sixteen years old. In 1709, the regiment was sent over to the Netherlands, where it was engaged for some months in garrison duty, owing, says the chronicle,* to the fact that it was composed mostly of "young soldiers". The next year it joined the main army of Marlborough. At the siege of Douay, it was "employed on duty in the trenches, carrying on the approaches, repulsing the sallies of the garrison, and storming the outworks", in all of which it repeatedly distinguished itself. On the conclusion of peace at Utrecht in 1713, the Thirty-Fourth was withdrawn with other regiments to England and soon afterwards it was reduced. But on the uprising of the Scots in 1715 under the Earl of Mar, the regiment was reformed with Thomas Chudleigh as colonel, who had in fact succeeded Hans Hamilton before the Peace of Utrecht. Among the new officers appears the name of Roger Sterne as one of nine ensigns. After varied service in Ireland, the restored regiment took part in the siege and capture of Vigo, in various operations in Flanders, and in the defence of Gibraltar. Under Chudleigh as well as under Hamilton, the Thirty-Fourth was conspicuous for its bravery in the field and "its good conduct in quarters".

Notwithstanding his long service, Roger Sterne attained to no high place in the army. To the last he seems to have been only a poor ensign, improvident and good-natured. He was described by his son, it should be said in passing, as "Lieutenant in Handaside's regiment", which was the Twenty-Second. But the statement about his rank as well as his regiment was likely an error of memory. At the outset of his career the ensign made a most unfortunate mar-

* Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the Thirty-Fourth, or The Cumberland Regiment of Foot* (London, 1844).

riage. Hitherto the Sternes had for generations allied themselves with the best families among the minor gentry. Now entered their blood the taint of commonness and vulgarity. Following the army in Flanders was "a noted sutler" named Nuttle, who was father or stepfather—it is uncertain which—to Agnes Hebert, "widow of a captain of a good family". Roger Sterne was in debt to Nuttle, and, to quit the score, he relieved the sutler of further support of his wife's daughter, by marrying her on September 25, 1711. The story of Roger Sterne and his family subsequent to this disastrous marriage is related in the brief memoir that the humourist wrote out for his daughter Lydia. The pathetic narrative is interwoven with the birth of Laurence and other children, and with those movements of the regiment which we have outlined in advance for the sake of clearness.

"This Nuttle", says the memoir, after telling why Roger Sterne married Agnes Hebert, "had a son by my grandmother—a fine person of a man but a graceless whelp—what became of him I know not.—The family (if any left), live now at Clonmel in the south of Ireland, at which town I was born November 24th, 1713, a few days after my mother arrived from Dunkirk.—My birth-day was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after our arrival, with many other brave officers broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children—the elder of which was Mary; she was born in Lisle in French Flanders, July the tenth, one thousand seven hundred and twelve, New Style.—This child was most unfortunate—she married one Weemans in Dublin—who used her most unmercifully—spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself,—which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend's house in the country, and died of a broken heart. She was a most beautiful woman—of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate.—The regiment, in which my father served, being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried, with the rest of his family, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived. She was daughter to Sir Roger Jaques, and an heiress. There we sojourned for about ten months, when the regiment

was established, and our household decamped with bag and baggage for Dublin—within a month of our arrival, my father left us, being ordered to Exeter, where, in a sad winter, my mother and her two children followed him, travelling from Liverpool by land to Plymouth. (Melancholy description of this journey not necessary to be transmitted here.) In twelve months we were all sent back to Dublin.—My mother, with three of us, (for she laid in at Plymouth of a boy, Joram), took ship at Bristol, for Ireland, and had a narrow escape from being cast away by a leak springing up in the vessel.—At length, after many perils, and struggles, we got to Dublin.—There my father took a large house, furnished it, and in a year and a half's time spent a great deal of money.—

“In the year one thousand seven hundred and nineteen, all unhing'd again; the regiment was ordered, with many others, to the Isle of Wight, in order to embark for Spain in the Vigo expedition. We accompanied the regiment, and were driven into Milford Haven, but landed at Bristol, from thence by land to Plymouth again, and to the Isle of Wight—where I remember we stayed encamped some time before the embarkation of the troops—(in this expedition from Bristol to Hampshire we lost poor Joram—a pretty boy, four years old, of the small-pox), my mother, sister, and myself, remained at the Isle of Wight during the Vigo Expedition, and until the regiment had got back to Wicklow in Ireland, from whence my father sent for us.—We had poor Joram's loss supplied during our stay in the Isle of Wight, by the birth of a girl, Anne, born September the twenty-third, one thousand seven hundred and nineteen.—This pretty blossom fell at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin—she was, as I well remember, of a fine delicate frame, not made to last long, as were most of my father's babes.—We embarked for Dublin, and had all been cast away by a most violent storm; but through the intercessions of my mother, the captain was prevailed upon to turn back into Wales, where we stayed a month, and at length got into Dublin, and travelled by land to Wicklow, where my father had for some weeks given us over for lost.—We lived in the barracks at Wicklow, one year,

(one thousand seven hundred and twenty) when Devijeher (so called after Colonel Devijeher,) was born; from thence we decamped to stay half a year with Mr. Fetherston, a clergyman, about seven miles from Wicklow, who being a relation of my mother's, invited us to his parsonage at Animo.—It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt—the story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland—where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me.—

“From hence we followed the regiment to Dublin, where we lay in the barracks a year.—In this year, one thousand seven hundred and twenty-one, I learned to write, &c.—The regiment, ordered in twenty-two, to Carrickfergus in the north of Ireland; we all decamped, but got no further than Drogheda, thence ordered to Mullengar, forty miles west, where by Providence we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle and kindly entertained us for a year—and sent us to the regiment at Carrickfergus, loaded with kindnesses, &c.—a most rueful and tedious journey had we all, in March, to Carrickfergus, where we arrived in six or seven days—little Devijeher here died, he was three years old—He had been left behind at nurse at a farmhouse near Wicklow, but was fetch'd to us by my father the summer after—another child sent to fill his place, Susan; this babe too left us behind in this weary journey—The autumn of that year, or the spring afterwards, (I forget which) my father got leave of his colonel to fix me at school—which he did near Halifax, with an able master; with whom I staid some time, 'till by God's care of me my cousin Sterne, of Elvington, became a father to me, and sent me to the university, &c. &c. To pursue the thread of our story, my father's regiment was the year after ordered to Londonderry, where another sister was brought forth, Catherine, still living, but most unhappily estranged from me by my uncle's wickedness, and her own folly—from this station the regiment was sent to defend Gibraltar, at the siege, where my father was run through the body by Captain Phillips, in a duel, (the quarrel begun about

a goose) with much difficulty he survived—tho' with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships it was put to—for he was sent to Jamaica, [with his colonel and a part of his regiment] where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first, and made a child of him, and then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an arm chair, and breathed his last—which was at Port Antonio, on the north of the island."

Of the poor ensign, perhaps just advanced to lieutenant, who died under circumstances so distressing, far from home sometime in March 1731, the son retained to the last very tender recollections. "My father", the narrative goes on to say, "was a little smart man—active to the last degree, in all exercises—most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full measure—he was in his temper somewhat rapid, and hasty—but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design; and so innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one; so that you might have cheated him ten times in a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose." At that time Laurence was still in school at Halifax and his mother and sister Catherine were living with friends in Ireland. On the death of her husband, Mrs. Sterne received a pension of £20 a year, and to add to her income she afterwards opened an embroidery school. Whatever may have been her birth, she proved to be, as will be duly related, an ill-bred woman, with whom none of her husband's family could associate. But for the moment it is more agreeable to let the mind rest upon Roger Sterne, from whom passed to his son the volatile temperament of his race as we have seen it forming from the archbishop down through the Rawdons—vivacious, quick to take an affront, and yet withal most kindly. In the man who lost his life for a goose surely lurked a humourist.

Clonmel, the place where Laurence Sterne was born, says the memoir, on November 24, 1713, is a small Irish town above Waterford, in the valley of the Suir. His mother had come there from Dunkirk that her child might be brought forth among relatives and friends. He was named Laurence, it

would seem, after that distant ancestor we have mentioned—Laurence Rawdon, sometime merchant and alderman at York and lord of the manor of Elvington. Hard as were the many long journeys and migrations upon the ensign and his wife during the subsequent ten years, the period must have been most agreeable to the boy himself. There were for him, who knew nothing of the tragedy of it, pleasant sojourns in Wales and in the Isle of Wight, and a whole year in an Irish castle with kind relatives. When he fell through a mill-race, like his great-grandfather the archbishop, while the mill was running, and came out whole and sound, his mother was upset, to be sure, by the incident; but to Laurie, as the country folk crowded about him in wonder at his escape, it was a moment of triumph; for he was the hero of an incredible adventure. He must have enjoyed, too, the large freedom of barrack life in England and in Ireland, however much it may have tested the endurance of his mother. There he met with new adventures and strange characters, the memory of which never left him. In after years, as he sat down in his Yorkshire parsonage to write his book, his childhood all came back to him—what he had seen with his own eyes and what his father had told him about the first serious engagement of the Thirty-Fourth Regiment of Foot in the battle of Wynendale, which Count de la Motte would have won, “had he not pressed too speedily into the wood”, and about the Peace of Utrecht which broke my uncle Toby’s heart as well as sent Roger Sterne adrift in the world. Out of those memories, fortified by much reading of Marlborough’s campaigns and enriched by later observations, came my uncle Toby, Trim, and Le Fever. Of no one more than of Sterne is the saying of Wordsworth truer that the child is father to the man.

II

Having learned to read and write while he lay in the barracks of Dublin, the boy was ready, by 1723 or 1724, for the rudiments of learning. His father then placed him in a grammar school near Halifax, that he might be under the eye of his uncle Richard at Woodhouse Hall. At that time

Halifax took the lead in cloth-making among all the towns of north England. Defoe, who passed through the parish in his tour of Great Britain, was much struck by the thrift of the people living in long rows of houses on the hillsides, so thickly placed as to be within speaking distance of one another. All along in front of the houses were tenters on which were stretched pieces of cloth, which, says Defoe, "by their Whiteness reflecting the bright Rays of the Sun that played upon them, formed, I thought, the most agreeable Sight I ever saw".* Sterne is strangely silent in his books about this and other novel scenes to which he had been suddenly transferred. Thrift certainly made upon him no impression comparable with the gaiety of military life. Perhaps he chafed under the restraints of his new surroundings. It is a tradition, supported by an incident or two, that the boy studied when he liked and got more whippings than lessons. It may be that he did not get along well with his uncle at Woodhouse Hall, for he nowhere mentions this Richard Sterne among the relatives that aided him. But his uncle surely gave him shelter and helped pay the expenses of his schooling. Though Sterne had nothing to say about his uncle, he spoke with respect of the head of the school, describing him as "an able master". Whoever he may have been, he saw in Sterne a lad of unusual promise; being the first, as we say nowadays, to discover him. It was not the master but the usher that did the whipping to which reference has been made. Sterne himself related the incident, with some pride, for his daughter Lydia. The master, says Sterne, "had had the cieling of the school-room new white-washed—the ladder remained there—I one unlucky day mounted it, and wrote with a brush in large capital letters, LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said, before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment—this expression made me forget the stripes I had received."

The name of the school where this escapade occurred,

* *A Tour through Great Britain*, III, 78 (second edition, London, 1738).

Sterne failed to mention. The words of his memoir are simply "My father got leave of his colonel to fix me at school—which he did near Halifax, with an able master". At that time there were, as there are now, two grammar schools near Halifax—the one at Heath, to the south of Halifax and within easy walking distance from Woodhouse up over the moor; the other at Hipperholme, to the east of Halifax and across the valley from Shibden Hall. The former was an ancient foundation, with a stately building of freestone, dating from the fortieth year of Queen Elizabeth. The latter, a smaller and less pretentious structure, was founded and endowed in 1661 by Matthew Broadley, Esq., of London, formerly of Halifax. Both were established for the instruction of youth in grammar (Latin and Greek) and other literature and learning, and in all those virtues and good manners which should be a part of a liberal education. By express statute, the masters of both schools were required to be able and sufficient persons, holding at least the degree of Bachelor of Arts from either Oxford or Cambridge. Of their scholars, such private records as may have been kept by the masters have all been lost or destroyed. In which school was educated the author of *Tristram Shandy*?

According to common tradition, at least a century old, Sterne prepared for the university at the Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth at Heath. A clergyman who attended the school between 1808 and 1820, said in a letter to a former master: "The legend during the time that I was at Heath respecting Sterne was that he was a scholar there, and the panel on the ceiling was pointed out, on which he was said to have daubed Lau: Sterne". An inscription similar to Sterne's, if not the very one, was actually seen and remembered by John Turney of Leek Wotton, in Warwickshire, who passed the year 1809-10 at Heath. Besides noting the fact in his copy of Sterne's works, he wrote of it more fully thirty-odd years back in a letter to a friend. "The name of Sterne", says the letter, "was marked on the cieling of the School Room in irregular Characters, as if done by some one who knew he was doing wrongly and was fearful of being detected in the Act. They were large Letters, say (I speak

from memory of course) about four and a half inches high, all Capitals. They were black as if, as I thought, burnt in with a Candle, the smoke from the Candle causing them to be black.—LAU STERNE was inscribed about three yards from the Head Master's desk. It ran obliquely from S. W. with rather a turn to the East." The master of Heath in Sterne's time was a certain Thomas Lister, distantly related to the Listers of Shibden Hall. He graduated Bachelor in Medicine from Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1688, and received his appointment to the school in the same year. After forty years of service, he died in April 1728. On the supposition that Sterne was a Heath scholar, this, then, was the master who thought him winged for a higher flight than the rest of the boys. On the same supposition, the usher who flogged Laurence, may perhaps be identified with one Abraham Milner, a young man eighteen or twenty years old, who never received a degree from either of the great universities, and afterwards opened a bookseller's shop at Halifax.

The case as thus worked out for Heath, is a complete and very pretty tale which ought to be true. It really rests, however, upon nothing but vague tradition. It may all be a legend that has grown up round the mere fact that the school was at a convenient distance from the seat of Laurence's uncle. No one, of course, can be disposed to doubt the memory of the old scholar who could recall the Sterne inscription on the ceiling. It is, nevertheless, preposterous to suppose that the original inscription had survived eighty or more years of whitewash and plaster. What the Warwickshire gentleman saw and remembered was doubtless the freak of some boy of later date, who could not find "LAU STERNE" on the ceiling, and so proceeded to put it there. To strike more nearly at the heart of the story, the Heath Grammar School, so flourishing earlier and since, was, just in Sterne's time, in a wretched condition. It had for some years been neglected by its governors, who dropped out one by one until there was nobody qualified to receive rents or to fill up vacancies; and its statutes, very strict as one reads them, had all fallen into abeyance. The master, Thomas Lister, was described at his death by a Halifax lawyer as an

“old little good for naught fellow”, and by others as long “superannuated” and never efficient. For at least two years before his death, his “few petty scholars” were left to the usher, who was spoken of with equal contempt. Over this state of affairs Richard Sterne became hot as early as 1719, when he reported the mismanagement to the Archbishop of York, within whose jurisdiction the school lay. After years of trouble and expense, the squire succeeded in reorganising the school under a revised charter bearing date July 31, 1729. A new master, one Christopher Jackson, was appointed in 1730, but he resigned the next year, either because he disliked his position or because he proved incompetent. By that time the school days of Laurence Sterne were nearly over. For two or three of the seven years that Sterne was at school, the master of Heath was superannuated, and for two more there was no master at all. It is difficult to imagine that Laurence could have been among the “few petty scholars” of this period or that he could have regarded as “an able master” the man whom another called a “good for naught”. It is much more likely that Thomas Lister, whom, of course, Sterne saw, knew, and heard talked about at Woodhouse, sat for the burlesque portrait of that tutor whom Mr. Walter Shandy would by no means have for his son Tristram. “The governor”, said Mr. Shandy, “I make choice of shall neither lisp, or squint, or wink, or talk loud, or look fierce, or foolish;—or bite his lips, or grind his teeth, or speak through his nose. * * * He shall neither walk fast,—or slow, or fold his arms,—for that is laziness;—or hang them down,—for that is folly; or hide them in his pocket, for that is nonsense.—He shall neither strike, or pinch, or tickle,—or bite, or cut his nails * * * or snift, or drum with his feet or fingers in company.”

Around the Free Grammar School at Hipperholme has been elaborated no fanciful legend of Laurence Sterne, perhaps, as has been indicated, because the school was not so near to Woodhouse. But it is an unbroken tradition among the Listers of Shibden Hall that Hipperholme was Sterne’s school. Miss Lister, who was living thirty years ago at an advanced age, distinctly remembered “her father telling her

that Laurence Sterne used to walk to Hipperholme School from his uncle's house along an ancient foot path which formerly ran through the yard of Shibden Hall". She said further that Sterne was "a frequent visitor" at the Hall, when her grandfather, born in the same year as Sterne, was a boy. It may be that the aged lady was mistaken. But a sober statement like hers, bearing none of the marks of fiction, must be accepted, unless there is evidence to the contrary. As a matter of fact, Hipperholme exactly fits into what Sterne said about his school. It was, said Sterne, "near Halifax". Hipperholme is near Halifax, though not so near Woodhouse as is Heath. But Sterne did not say "near Woodhouse",—that is an added phrase. It was possible for him to have walked from his uncle's seat to Hipperholme; for if he could find, as he says in *Shandy*, no short cut to learning, he found one to school through the park of Shibden Hall. It seems, however, probable that Sterne stayed a good deal with his friend and schoolmate at Shibden Hall, and he may have lived in the earlier years—his own words would bear that interpretation—with the master of Hipperholme, going to his uncle for the week ends.

During the entire period of Sterne's schooling, the master of Hipperholme was a Reverend Nathan Sharpe, connected through the Priestleys with the Listers and with Richard Sterne, whose first wife was a Priestley. He was graduated Bachelor in Arts from Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1695, and was appointed to Hipperholme in 1703, where he remained till his death thirty years later. A Mr. Sharpe, apparently this one, baptised in 1704 the first child of Richard Sterne. Another member of the family, Abraham Sharpe, also a Cambridge man, whom Richard Sterne addressed as cousin, held the curacy of Sowerby Bridge near Woodhouse. Besides being a relative of the master of Hipperholme, Richard Sterne was also a large landowner in the township and a governor of the school. Family interests thus point directly to Hipperholme as the place where Laurence Sterne acquired the rudiments of learning. When Sterne came to Halifax, Nathan Sharpe was still in the prime of life, not above forty-eight years of age. So far as can be determined, he managed his

school well, fulfilling that requirement of the statutes which Sterne but repeated when he referred to his teacher as "an able master". Just as Thomas Lister may have been the original of that schoolmaster whom the elder Shandy could not think of for his son, so Nathan Sharpe may have furnished hints for the man he was in search of. "I will have him, continued my father, chearful, facete, jovial; at the same time, prudent, attentive to business, vigilant, acute, argute, inventive, quick in resolving doubts and speculative questions;—he shall be wise, and judicious, and learned:—And why not humble, and moderate, and gentle-tempered, * * * said *Yorick*:" It was certainly a master of this character who rebuked his usher for whipping Laurence Sterne and by his praise made the boy forget his punishment.*

After all has been said, there still remains reasonable doubt as to where Sterne received his early education. The considerations here set forth in favour of Hipperholme establish conclusively that Sterne was for a time a scholar there, and render it highly probable that he was placed there from the first with the able master who was a friend and relative of his uncle. But it is possible, though not very probable, that he first attended Heath for a year or two, until its affairs reached a crisis, and that he was then transferred to Hipperholme. The question could be settled beyond all doubt only by the registry of the students of the period, but that, if it ever existed, has not survived. The only document that gives us a glimpse of Sterne at school is an old exercise book that once came to the hands of Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, from what source he does not say, bearing the title, *Synopsis Communium Locorum ex Poetis Latinis Collecta*, written above the words "Lau. Sterne, September ye 6, 1725". As it bears in another place the date "1728", if there be no misprint, one must infer that Sterne remained in the same school through the period covered by the dates, for he would not likely be put to the same exercises under different masters. It also seems a fair inference that if Sterne was ever at

* Local traditions concerning Sterne's school are contained in Thomas Cox, *A Popular History of the Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth, at Heath, near Halifax* (Halifax, 1879).

Heath, he remained for only a short time, migrating to Hipperholme as early as 1725. The old "dogged eared volume", as described by Mr. Fitzgerald, shows that Laurence idled a good deal over his lessons, stopping to play, much like Shakespeare's schoolboy, over declensions which are made to include *Nickibus Nonkebus* and *rorum rarum*. Here and there occur the names of Sterne's schoolmates, as "John Turner", "Richard Carr, ejus liber", "Bill Copper", and "I owe Samuel Thorpe one halfpenny but I will pay him to-day". Elsewhere it is said that "labour takes panes". In one place appears a stave of notes with the names written below and signed "L. S.". Most interesting as a clue to Sterne's taste then and in after life are the rude drawings scattered over many of the pages. Mingled with owls, cocks, and hens, are several heads of women, and curiously dressed soldiers with sugar-loaf caps, short-stock guns, and straps, such as he remembered from barrack life. There is "a drummer", "a piper", and over one "long-nosed, long chinned face" is written "This is Lorence".*

Notwithstanding the time spent in scribbling over his copybooks, Sterne then laid the foundation of a ready knowledge of the classical literatures. He learned to read and write Latin with great facility. Nearly all the authors in the usual curriculum of the period, he at some time quoted or referred to, evidently from memory. Horace came into his books perhaps more often than the rest. But Cicero, Pliny, Hesiod, and Isocrates are there also. Three other ancients touched his emotions deeply. It grieved him to think that "poor Ovid" died in exile. In *Shandy*, he related, as he remembered it from Vergil, the scene in the Elysian Fields where Aeneas meets "the pensive shade of his forsaken Dido", and added that she still awakened in him "those affections which were wont to make me mourn for her when I was at school". Uncle Toby's love for the *Iliad*, as well as for chapbooks in which there were soldiers and adventure and much fighting, is undoubtedly only a reminiscence of Sterne's own passion for them. If we may have it so, the boy purchased with his own pocket money "Guy of War-

* Fitzgerald, *Life of Sterne*, I, 9-10 (London, 1896).

wick'', "Valentine and Orson'', "The Seven Champions of Christendom'', and handed them round among his school companions. And of the "Iliad'', he says: "Was I not as much concerned for the destruction of the *Greeks* and *Trojans* as any boy of the whole school? Had I not three strokes of a ferula given me, two on my right hand, and one on my left, for calling *Helena* a b * * * * for it? Did any one of you shed more tears for *Hector*? And when king *Priam* came to the camp to beg his body, and returned weeping back to *Troy* without it,—you know, brother, I could not eat my dinner.'' In all this Sterne doubtless carried back to his school days much of his maturer sentiment; and yet it may be fairly inferred that the characters in the books he read at school were real persons to him in whose adventures he took an active and sympathetic part beyond the habit of most boys. This love for ancient literature was quite sufficient for the master's prophecy, after the whipping, that Laurence possessed talents that would bring him to preferment.

Between school and university intervened for Sterne a period of uncertainty. By 1731 at the latest he should have been ready for Cambridge. But just at this time news reached him of his father's death in the West Indies; and the boy, then in his eighteenth year, was left "without one shilling in the world''. His mother in much distress came over from Ireland; and after scant courtesy from her husband's relatives, she returned to Clonmel with her pension of £20, barely sufficient for the support of herself and Catherine, whom she kept with her. Any aid to her son was out of the question. The next year his uncle Richard, "being somewhat infirm in body'', started for York and fell dead at Bradford. By his will signed and sealed* a few weeks before his death, Richard Sterne bequeathed his royalty and estate at Elvington and all his estates at Ovenden, Halifax, and Hipperholme to his eldest son Richard by Dorothy Lister; and to a younger son Timothy by Esther Booth, were bequeathed Woodhouse and all his lands within the parish of Skircoat. Timothy, then only a boy, afterwards married and

* Signed September 11, and proved October 25, 1732.—York Registry of Wills.

settled at Woodhouse Hall, where, surrounded by horses and dogs, he developed into a squire of the kind one may read about in Addison and Fielding. Laurence never mentioned Timothy, probably because he was under no obligation to him. Richard, the eldest son and chief heir, barely twenty-five years old at his father's death, also soon married and took up his residence at Elvington. Between Richard and Laurence there must have been much in common, for the humourist, in spite of differences that sprang up later in life, always spoke with respect and affection of his cousin at Elvington. He became, said Sterne in reviewing his career, "a father to me"; to his protection "I chiefly owe what I now am"; and but for his aid, "I should have been driven out naked into the world, young as I was, and to have shifted for myself as well as I could".

The substantial service for which Sterne expressed this profound gratitude was an allowance of £30 a year towards his expenses at the university. After drifting about for several months, he went up to Cambridge, says the memoir, in 1732, but the date is clearly a slip in memory by a full year. He was enrolled, according to the record of it, as a sizar at Jesus College on July 6, 1733. The choice of this college out of all others at Cambridge was most natural, for his uncle Jaques and his master at Halifax, whether Mr. Sharpe or Mr. Lister, were both educated there; and his great-grandfather, Archbishop Sterne, had been one of its masters and generous benefactors. As in everything else connected with Sterne some fact or incident will appear out of the usual order, so it is with the official records of him at Cambridge. Fashioned himself unlike other men, it is as if all who had to do with him, whether closely or at a distance, were infected by his own strange courses. In his day sizars were admitted to Jesus College and elsewhere only after "being examined and approved". *Examinatus et approbatus* is the stereotyped formula. But no examination was required of Sterne. He was admitted "in his absence", reads the entry, "with the assent of Master and Fellows". Moreover, the official who enrolled him put down his name as Henry instead of Laurence, and described him as a native of York,

either by mistake or by the direction of the master. The next year—on July 30, 1734—Sterne, then in residence, was elected, after being duly sworn, to one of the scholarships founded by his great-grandfather “for natives of Yorkshire and Nottingham”, though, as he was born in Ireland, he did not possess the necessary qualifications. Of these curious irregularities, the readiest explanation is that before Laurence was entered at Cambridge, his cousin Richard of Elvington had come to some agreement with the Master of Jesus, whereby all technicalities relative to birth-place and examination were to be waived in consideration of the young man’s descent from Archbishop Sterne. The boy could not have been accorded greater favours had he been the son of a nobleman. For some reason—perhaps because of the fee—Sterne deferred matriculation in the university until March 29, 1735, nearly two years after he came into residence.

The Master of Jesus was Charles Ashton, a quiet scholar known for his studies in classical and patristic literature. Among the learned fellows Sterne had as his first tutor Charles Cannon, a young man about thirty years old. Cannon died in the winter of 1734-5 and Sterne was then transferred to John Bradshaw, a fellow some six years older, who guided him through the rest of the course and recommended him for his degree. Associated with Sterne under his second tutor were a certain Thomas Mould, a Peter Tomiano, who failed to take a degree, and Frederick Keller, who became a distinguished fellow of his college and the literary executor of Dr. Ashton. Whether any unusual friendship existed between Sterne and Keller is not known; but it is interesting to observe in passing that the two men were prepared for their examinations by the same tutor.

Sterne, with his family pride, could not have been fully at ease in his position in the university. Sizars, to be sure, then performed no menial services at Cambridge; the time was past when they were required, as Eachard complains, to fetch water, sweep chambers, and make beds for their superiors; and the line was no longer fast drawn between them and the pensioners and fellow-commoners above them. There were nevertheless social and other distinctions which

would be felt and resented by a sensitive nature. With no tassels to their caps, unlucky sizars wore in clear view the badge of poverty. Sterne's allowance from his cousin, with the £10 a year that he received from his scholarship, sufficed no more than for the essentials of maintenance and clothing. Gentlemen then commonly spent thrice that sum. Without running into debt there could have been for Sterne no luxuries nor suppers and wine parties, such as were expected of youngsters from good families. Under the circumstances Sterne did exactly as one would expect of him: he borrowed money, from what source he does not say, and sought congenial companions here and there among the men who, in the university scale, ranked socially above him. The names of but two of these friends have escaped oblivion. One was John Fountayne of Melton Manor, South Yorkshire, who was enrolled at St. Catharine's Hall. He was afterwards elected Dean of York and then he and Sterne were again placed in very intimate relations. Each, as will be duly related, came to the aid of the other in a noisy church quarrel which gave Sterne local reputation for a smart and witty pen. The other friend was John Hall, who some years later added Stevenson to his name and inherited Skelton Castle, over on the Yorkshire coast near Saltburn-by-the-Sea. He is the "dear cousin Antony" of numerous letters and the discreet Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*, who warns Yorick against "unwary pleasantry", lest it bring him into "scrapes and difficulties" out of which no after-wit can extricate him. Five years younger than Sterne, Hall-Stevenson entered Jesus College as a fellow-commoner in 1735. Though the two men were together at Cambridge for only a year and a half, that time was long enough for a close friendship "which ever after * * * continued one and indivisible through life".

Hall-Stevenson was, as described by one who recollected him at college, "an ingenious young gentleman and in person very handsome". And so he appears in the fine portrait of him in velvet and lace that still hangs at Skelton. He was also an idler and decadent much given to the perusal of Rabelais and other facetious books in the French tongue. To Hall-Stevenson, Sterne was undoubtedly indebted for his

first acquaintance with the great master of French humour. The two young men used to sit together under the large walnut tree that shaded the inner court of Jesus College, not we may be sure "to study", as the York anecdotist relates it, but to read the common lounging-books, which in those days included, among others besides Rabelais, Joe Miller's Jests, Mrs. Behn's novels, Lord Rochester's poems, and the plays of Wycherley and Congreve. This old walnut tree they aptly called the Tree of Knowledge, inasmuch as they learned of good and evil while resting beneath its shadow.

Sterne's associations with Hall-Stevenson would seem to be ample warrant for the tradition that he "was careless and inattentive to his book", that is, to the prescribed studies; that "he laughed a great deal, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his tutors". But such a summary in a phrase or two is inexact and incomplete. Sterne's main quarrel with the learned society of fellows and tutors of Jesus College, as set forth in *Tristram Shandy*, was that they were mere men of reading, who with their slight knowledge of the world thought that "wisdom can speak in no other language than Greek and Latin". "There is a husk and shell", he said of pedagogues, preceptors, tutors and gerund-grinders, "which grows up with learning, which their unskilfulness knows not how to fling away". But among these unskilled scholars he did not include without reserve his own tutors, one or both of whom he took pains to describe as "worthy". The ancient poets and historians that Sterne read under the guidance of these men, he always mentioned and quoted with delight. Homer and Vergil, which were continued at college, he never tired of. Theocritus and Pindar charmed him for "the sweetness of the numbers" and "the musical placing of the words". Of the historians he liked best Thucydides, Herodotus, and Livy; while his praise of Tacitus was rather measured. The decisive style of Tacitus, he thought, overshot the mark, outwitting both author and reader. Eloquence, wherever found, always appealed to Sterne strongly. But when he came to the dry bones of literary theory, rhetoric, logic, and metaphysics, he was simply amused that intellect should employ itself in that

way. All these studies, which entered largely into the curriculum, he turned in aftertime to banter and gay ridicule. The only rhetorician that he ever praised freely is Longinus, whom he declared "the best critic the eastern world ever produced". That admiration was based, it is quite clear, not so much upon the real worth of what Longinus wrote as upon his grand style. All the rest were his game. Near the opening of *Tristram Shandy* he begins his sport with those directions to writers which Horace laid down in the *Art of Poetry*. "I shall"—says Sterne there, shifting the figurative meaning of the phrase to the literal—"I shall start out, as Mr. Horace would have me, *ab ovo*; but beyond that I shall follow no rules of the ancients." Later on he has a fling at the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* which he read at college, explaining in lively banter the various parts of a drama—*protasis*, *epitasis*, *catastasis*, *catastrophe* or *peripetia*—which grow out of one another in the order the critic first planted them, and "without which a tale had better never be told at all".

Perhaps Sterne overflows most in ridicule when he turns to logic. In his day the students at Cambridge were supposed to read the Latin manual on logic written by Francis Burgersdicius, sometime professor at Leyden, and the Dutch commentators thereon. Formal logic also then pervaded the instruction not only in mathematics but also in physics and moral philosophy. Sterne evidently had great contempt for the exercises wherein he was required to defend or oppose according to the stiff and rigid rules of logic a thesis drawn from one of these subjects. The academical dispute seemed to him only an adroit manipulation of words and phrases. This attitude of his towards logic is summed up in the character and sayings of the elder Shandy, in whom nature blended her own rhetoric and logic without the aid of the schools. When the country squire—in an imaginary scene, which may have a faint counterpart in a visit of his own with his uncle or cousin Richard—went up to Cambridge to enter his son at Jesus College, the fellows and tutors whom he met there could not understand how a man that had never heard a single lecture on the Dutch logicians should be able to talk

and reason as cleverly as themselves. The squire seemed to be aware, as well as the respondents and opponents whom they trained for the public acts, that a disputant should aim, not to convince, but to silence the man against him. It was known to him, as well as to Burgersdicius and his disciples, that "every thesis and hypothesis have an offspring of propositions; and each proposition has its own consequences and conclusions; every one of which leads the mind on again into fresh tracks of enquiries and doubtings". Mr. Shandy was also afflicted, just as were they, with "the commonplace infirmity of the greatest mathematicians", who work "with might and main at the demonstration, and so wasting all their strength upon it, * * * have none left in them to draw the corollary, to do good with".

It was the opinion of Mr. Shandy that the English school-boy began his studies too late and was kept at them too long. Listen to the squire as he enumerates to a company gathered at Shandy Hall the stages that Sterne himself passed through from the cradle to the Bachelor's degree:

"Five years with a bib under his chin;

"Four years in travelling from Christ-cross-row to Malachi;

"A year and a half in learning to write his own name;

"Seven long years and more *τυπτω*-ing it, at Greek and Latin;

"Four years at his *probations* and his *negations*—the fine statue still lying in the middle of the marble block,—and nothing done, but his tools sharpened to hew it out!—'Tis a piteous delay!—Was not the great *Julius Scaliger* within an ace of never getting his tools sharpened at all?—Forty-four years old was he before he could manage his Greek;—and *Peter Damianus*, lord bishop of *Ostia*, as all the world knows, could not so much as read, when he was of man's estate.—And *Baldus* himself, as eminent as he turned out after, entered upon the law so late in life, that every body imagined he intended to be an advocate in the other world: no wonder, when *Eudamidas*, the son of *Archidamas*, heard *Xenocrates* at seventy-five disputing about *wisdom*, that he asked gravely,

—If the old man be yet disputing and enquiring concerning wisdom,—what time will he have to make use of it?”

Mr. Shandy would have none of this delay in the education of his son Tristram, and so set about to discover “a North-west passage to the intellectual world”. He found it in a running dance with the auxiliary verbs. By conjugating *have*, *do*, *shall*, *will*, etc., with a variety of nouns and pronouns, affirmatively, negatively, interrogatively, and hypothetically, it was shown conclusively that a young gentlemen might be taught in a few lessons “to discourse with plausibility upon any subject, *pro* and *con*, and to say and write all that could be spoken or written concerning it, without blotting a word, to the admiration of all who beheld him”. This is the key to all knowledge, the *ars magna*, says Sterne, that Raymond Lully and numerous scholastics have long sought for in vain. Once in the secret of it, a man may talk on forever about things and entities whereof he knows nothing. The great art was especially commended by Sterne to college tutors whose business it might be to provide topics in logic for the young gentlemen who come under their charge. He could assure them to a certainty that there was nothing like the use of the auxiliaries for setting “the soul a-going by herself upon the materials as they are brought to her”. “By the versability of this great engine, round which they are twisted”, may be opened, he declared, “new tracks of enquiry”, and every idea be made to “engender millions”.

The light of a new age in science and speculation was beginning to break upon Cambridge while Sterne was there. For some time Newton, Hobbes, Locke, and various modern historians and publicists had formed part of the usual course of reading.* To these writers Sterne took strong likes and dislikes. Pufendorf’s immense work on the *Law of Nature* was not forgotten by the humourist when he came to describe in *Tristram Shandy* the incontestable rights of the Homunculus which the eminent jurist had forgotten to enumerate.

* For the reading prescribed and recommended at Cambridge in Sterne’s time, see Christopher Wordsworth, *Scholae Academicæ* (Cambridge, 1877). Compare with Sterne, John Eachard’s burlesque of the university curriculum in *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy* (London, 1670, reprinted in Arber’s *English Garner*, VII).

Clüver, the German historian and geographer, he regarded as a pedant, who spent his time in trying to ascertain where the Goths and other Germanic tribes were first seated and so had nothing to say about their manners and customs. Why, asks Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, did not "the learned Cluverius" mention in his *Germania Antiqua*, the wise custom among the Goths "of debating every thing of importance to their state, twice; that is,—once drunk, and once sober:—Drunk—that their councils might not want vigor;—and sober—that they might not want discretion". That story, Sterne would say, is more interesting than the geography of the country between the Vistula and the Oder. On the other hand Sterne admired Newton at a distance. Of Hobbes he knew enough to allude to that quaint title-page of the *Leviathan* whereon is depicted graphically the horns of a dilemma, upon which hang syllogisms of various sorts while masters and students stand about in their gowns. Finally, Sterne could never cease praising the author of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. After all his wanderings in logic and metaphysics, he discovered in the *great* Locke, the *sagacious* Locke, a writer who really knew what passes in a man's mind, and one whose search was ever after truth, not after adroit and dishonest means for defending propositions that every one knows must be false. The famous essay became Sterne's companion to the end of life and coloured much of his own thinking.

Sterne received his degrees from Jesus College in due course, graduating B.A. in January 1736-7 and M.A. at commencement in July 1740. When he appeared for his first degree he could not have been included—needless to say perhaps—among "the hard reading men" of the type of Frederick Keller. But he had read, as we have seen, the books that he was expected to know; and they were tucked away in memory ready for his purposes when needed. An old anecdotist likely guessed the truth, if he had no authority for the statement, when he said that Sterne had a way of puzzling his tutors. But it was, we may be sure, only the good natured banter of a man "who loved a jest in his heart". We miss greatly some authentic account of the impression

that Sterne made upon his tutors and associates. On this point there is nothing beyond what was current thirty years after. It was then said that "Sterne left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, that had no harm in him; and who had parts if he would use them". A portrait of a beautiful youth by Allan Ramsay, believed to be Sterne at the age of twenty-seven, when he came up for his Master's degree, now hangs, as was said earlier, near Coleridge, in the hall of Jesus College. It is an oval face in the freshness of youth, such as Sterne himself admired, with full eyes and full lips, but hardly suggestive of the humour that was in him.

Sterne was destined for the Church, not because of deep and peculiar piety but because the Church was an obvious career to one who bore his name. In that way awaited him a livelihood and the preferment which his master had prophesied for him while at school. His immediate prospects, however, were far from bright. He began the world, as he often said, with "many difficulties and drawbacks". All along his family had looked upon him as the son of his mother rather than of his father. The annual stipend of £30 from his cousin Richard, inadequate at best, was paid irregularly, and not at all during his last year at Cambridge. So Sterne was compelled to borrow money elsewhere to settle his university debts. The expense of his food and clothing for the nine years at the Halifax grammar school was also charged up, he was now to discover, against him to be paid as soon as he should be able. From the first he had been a delicate boy like most of his father's children who had been left by the way one after another. In stature above middle height, he was slim and hollow-chested. A dread disease lurking in his blood became manifest near the close of his residence at Cambridge. One night he was startled out of sleep by a hemorrhage of the lungs, "bleeding", he says, "the bed full". Fortunately, Sterne possessed a buoyant nature which could win the race against debts and consumption.*

* The following are the original entries relative to Sterne in the register of Jesus College:

Under July 6, 1733:

Henricus Sterne Eboracensis absens admissus est in Ordinem Sizarum cum consensu Magistri & Sociorum sub Tutore suo Mro Cannon.

Under July 30, 1734:

Laurentius Sterne electus est et admissus, prius juratus, Exhibitionarius Episcopi Eboracensis in locum Dni Hall.

Under January 14, 1736-7:

Eodem etiam die Fredericus Keller, Petrus Tomiano, Laurence Sterne & Thomas Mould habuerunt veniam sibi concessam petendi gratiam ab Academia ad respondendum Quaestioni, spondente Mro Bradshaw.

Under August 4, 1737:

Litterae Testimoniales concessae sunt Dno Sterne.

Henricus in the first entry was afterwards deleted for *Laurentius*; *Arch* was also written before *Episcopi* in the second entry. *Arch*, of course, should be *Archi*. *Mro* is an abbreviation for *Magistro*; and *Dni* an abbreviation for *Domini*.

"The Ramsay portrait," writes Mr. Arthur Gray, Vice-Master of Jesus College, "was presented to the college by one of the Fellows, Mr. Hugh Shield, A. C., a few years ago. It is traditionally and, I believe, correctly said to be a portrait of Sterne in his youth and is unquestionably by Allan Ramsay."

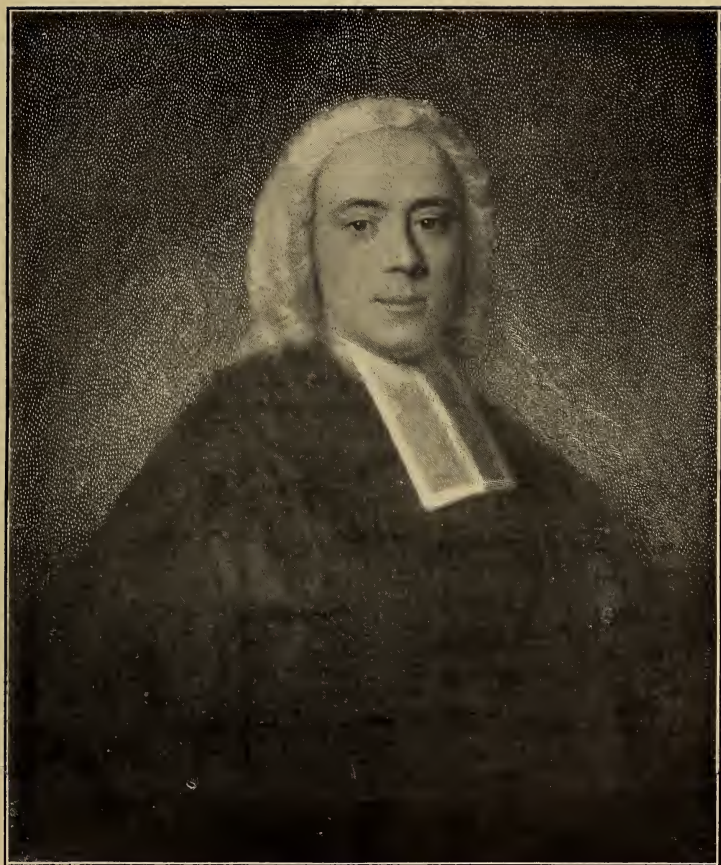
CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AND SETTLEMENT AT SUTTON-ON-THE-FOREST

1737-1744

AFTER obtaining his Bachelor's degree, Sterne immediately entered upon his career in the Church. On Sunday, March 6, he was duly admitted, among other candidates, to the order of deacons by Richard Reynolds, the Bishop of Lincoln, "being very well recommended", according to the customary formula, "for his exemplary Life, good Morals and virtuous qualities, and well instructed in the Study and knowledge of Sound Learning". The scene of this general ordination was the chapel of Buckden Hall near Huntingdon, long since in ruins, but then the palatial residence of the diocese. On the same day, Sterne was licensed by the Bishop of Lincoln to the curacy of St. Ives, five miles to the east of Huntingdon.

St. Ives is an ancient market-town, which then consisted mainly of a single row of houses straggling along the north-eastern bank of the slow-moving Ouse. In the rear was a cattle market, and beyond were farms extending out into the fens, one of which, "a stagnant flat tract of land", was cultivated for five years by Oliver Cromwell. It was, too, as a representative of St. Ives, that Bulwer-Lytton the novelist obtained his first seat in Parliament. And now to its associations may be added the name of Laurence Sterne, who there began the cure of souls. All Saints, where Sterne officiated, is a light and handsome church in the perpendicular style, overlooking the sleepy stream, with a lofty spire visible for miles out over the fens. Sterne came to the parish as curate to the vicar, one William Pigott, a graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Perhaps the two men had been acquainted at the university, for the vicar did not receive his Master's degree until 1734. But of this we do not know. No memorials



Laurence Sterne

From a painting by Ramsay at Jesus College, Cambridge

of the young curate of St. Ives longer exist; no entry of his in the parish registry; no tradition of him and his ways. Nothing remains but the bare record of his appointment in the Act Book of the Bishop of Lincoln. At most Sterne trod the flagstones of the ancient church at St. Ives for a year and a half and then passed out to new scenes.

In the meantime, an important change had taken place in the attitude of the Sterne family towards the young man. His cousin Richard apparently broke with him over college debts and soon died before reaching middle life. His uncle Jaques, who had hitherto refused absolutely to aid him, now became his patron and gave him a good start in the world, as he well could from his position in the Church of York. This Jaques Sterne, before our memoir has finally done with him, will turn out to be a splendid example, equal to any in Trollope's novels, of the worldly-wise ecclesiastic who strives for high place solely for his own comfort and aggrandisement. Without possessing the solid character of the old archbishop bearing the family name, he was proud, blustering, and bigoted, and withal totally devoid of humour.

Graduating from Jesus College, Bachelor of Arts in 1714, and Master of Arts in 1718, Jaques Sterne was ordained to the ministry in December 1720 at Bishopthorpe, the palace of the Archbishop of York. On February 5, 1722, he was instituted Vicar of Rise, a small parish near the coast in the East Riding of Yorkshire, to which living was added on May 3, 1729, the neighbouring vicarage of Hornsea-cum-Riston. A month before this last appointment—on April 3, 1729—he was installed Prebendary of Apesthorpe in York Minster, and was permitted the next year to exchange this prebend for Ulskelf. Accompanying his rise, in no way unusual up to this point, Jaques Sterne had received in 1725 the degree of Doctor of Laws from his college. He was henceforth to be known as Dr. Sterne, a title by which he liked to be called. Having once gained a foothold in the Church of York, Dr. Sterne added one dignity to another, never letting slip any that he already had except for something better. In April 1734 the eager pluralist was preferred to the rich prebend for South Muskham in the Cathedral Church of Southwell,

Nottinghamshire, which brought his annual income well above four hundred pounds. At the time of the appointment, he was too busy at York to appear in person at Southwell, and so the installation was by proxy. He was then in the midst of a fierce parliamentary contest, in which he won the day for the Whig candidate, Mr. Cholmley Turner, whose canvass he personally managed. After this brilliant success against the most stubborn and bitter opposition, Dr. Sterne easily took his place among those efficient church politicians of the period who were fighting the Whig battles for Walpole. Resigning the prebend of Ulskelf, he was appointed, on the seventeenth of November of the next year, Canon Residentiary and Precentor to York Minster, and Archdeacon of Cleveland. There was nothing further for him to ask for at present except a bishopric, but that could not be granted him.*

The motives that led Dr. Sterne to take up his nephew after years of neglect, one need not go far to seek. Laurence was no longer a helpless child of doubtful parentage whose education would be a drain upon the purse. He had made his way through the university, thereby displaying the Sterne energy and talents and proving himself the son of Roger Sterne rather than of a poor woman who followed the army in Flanders. No doubt Jaques Sterne thought it his duty to help along a member of his family who might come to something; but it is clear, in the light of subsequent events, that he mainly sought in his nephew a subservient tool for furthering his own ambitions. Clever politician as he was, he would first make him and then use him as an understrapper. What happened when the young man thoroughly understood this, would be, I dare say, interesting reading, if only we had the full details of the encounter. But all that, with the few details we have, is for a later story. Peace reigned for some years. Pursuant to the plans agreed upon by uncle and nephew, Laurence Sterne, having left St. Ives, was admitted to the priesthood, by Samuel Peploe, Bishop of Chester, at a

* For Jaques Sterne, see especially Le Neve and Hardy, *Fasts Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (Oxford, 1854); and G. Paulson, *History of Holderness* (Hull, 1890).

special ordination held in the Cathedral Church of Chester, on Sunday August 20, 1738. Four days later Lancelot Blackburne, the Archbishop of York, conferred upon him the vicarage of Sutton-on-the-Forest, within the archdeaconry of Cleveland. The next day he was formally inducted into the living by Richard Musgrave, the curate of Marton, with Philip Harland, the squire of the parish, as one of the witnesses.*

Sutton-on-the-Forest is a small village eight miles or more to the north of the city of York. As one comes upon the hamlet from York, the road suddenly turns to the right, running almost due east. On the north side stood, as it now stands, the little stone church with square tower, dedicated to All Saints, and beyond was the parsonage hidden away among shrubbery. From his gate, Sterne looked directly across upon the grange of Squire Harland, while on either side of the road was a row of cottages with small enclosures; and in various directions lanes led away to scattered farmsteads. The vicarage, which included the entire township of Sutton and of Huby to the west, extended over an area of nearly eleven thousand acres. It had formerly been known as Sutton-in-Galtres, for it lay at the heart of the immense Forest of Galtres, which stretched north to the ancient Isurium and south to the very walls of York. For centuries a royal hunting ground wherein the old kings "pursued the wild boar, the wolf, and other beasts of prey with which it was infested", the ancient forest is now chiefly remembered, outside of local history, as the scene where Shakespeare's John of Lancaster met the northern rebels under Richard Scroop, Archbishop of York, and after persuading him to disband his power, treacherously broke faith with him, ordering his arrest and immediate execution. "It was", says Thomas Gill's *Vallis Eboracensis*, "in many places thick and shady with lofty trees and underwood, and in others wet and flat, full of bogs and moorish quagmires". In 1670 Parliament

* All of Sterne's ordination papers with endorsements now repose in the British Museum. (*Additional Charters*, 16158-66). The information contained in these papers has been supplemented by an examination of the *Institutions* of the Diocese of York and the *Acts* of the Dean and Chapter.

passed an act for enclosing this wild waste; whereupon began those changes and improvements which have since converted Galtres into a rich and fruitful plain of meadows and pastures. In Sterne's time this transformation was not complete. Much of the forest had been levelled, meadows had been drained, and bogs had been filled up, but there yet remained many fields and large tracts of common land that had not been brought under the plough. If no longer in the forest, the hamlet of Sutton still lay within one of its old clearings which ran off in all directions into barren moors and marshes with woods beyond.

The only attraction which this parish in the wilderness could have had for Sterne was the £40 a year that it put into his purse. He probably never expected to go into permanent residence. For the next three years he stayed mostly at York, it would seem, driving out to Sutton sometimes for Sunday service and the business of his parish. On one of these occasions, the vicar took down the parish registry, and, before entering a marriage or baptism, sprawled in large letters across the page LAU^BENCE STERNE, much as he had done on the ceiling of the Halifax grammar school. The first entry in his hand, it may be interesting to note, was the marriage of John Newstead of Huby and Mary Wilkinson of Stillington, on Easter Tuesday, Anno Domini 1739. But most of the records for this year, and all of them, I think, for 1740 are signed by Richard Wilkinson, a young man in deacon's orders, whom Sterne placed over the parish. Mr. Wilkinson was at Sutton on a slightly irregular appointment, merely as Sterne's assistant, for his license to the cure bears the date of December 17, 1740. His parish duties provided for, Sterne likely kept close to York, by the source of ecclesiastical preferment. Vacancies were then filled so promptly that candidates unless near at hand stood no chance of winning. On January 12, 1740-1, the prebend of Givendale in York Cathedral was resigned by the incumbent for the chancellorship, and five days later Sterne was in possession of the stall. Thenceforth he became a member of the York Chapter and took his turns at preaching in the great minster. "He sat down quietly", says the contemporary account, "in

the lap of the church; and if it was not yet covered with a fringed cushion, 'twas not naked."

At that time York was in truth as in name the metropolis of the north. Many country gentlemen made it their residence the year through, while others came in for the winter with their families. Provisions of all sorts were cheap and plentiful and hospitality abounded. Those who could not afford houses of their own went into lodgings or put up at one of the inns, of which the George in Coney Street was the meeting place of gentlemen to talk politics, confer with their lawyers, make and sign contracts, and nominate for mayor or member of Parliament. Nearby was Sunton's Coffee-House, one of several coffee-houses at York, and Sterne's favourite resort for gossip or a convivial evening with the club to which he belonged. During the season, which began in November, there were, says Defoe, who included York in one of his tours, "assemblies, music-meetings or some entertainment every night in the week"; while for a week in May and August a concourse of people, including the neighbouring and distant nobility and gentry, poured into the city from all sides for the amusements of "the great races", held on the field of Knavesmire, then one of the best courses in England. Chance visitors at the races in Sterne's day were amazed at the prodigious sums lost and won or left behind for lodgings, the theatre, and subscription balls. For those who required greater excitement than watching Antelope and Grenadier* run for his Majesty's purse of a hundred guineas, there was provided, twice a day during the week of the races and frequently at other times, a main of cocks with bye-battles,† between the gentlemen of York and the gentlemen of Halifax, Bradford, or some other respectable town of the north.

York had also her own company of players, chosen with a "particular care * * * to their private life that they might be as sociable off the stage, as entertaining upon it". They had long performed in one of the cockpits, but by the time Sterne came to York, they were moving into their theatre in the Mint Yard, modelled after those of London.

* *York Courant*, August 11, 1752.

† *Ibid.* August 13, 1751.

There Sterne had an opportunity to see the whole range of the English drama from Shakesp^eare and Jonson down to a comic opera founded upon local scene and character.* And not far from the theatre were the Assembly Rooms, the very centre of fashion. The building, which was designed after Palladio by that Earl of Burlington to whom Pope and Gay paid generous compliment, was then regarded as very beautiful, though it now appears heavy and dingy enough. It contained a spacious and showy hall ornamented in the antique Egyptian manner, and six other rooms, all of which, writes Defoe, were “finely illuminated with lustres of an extraordinary size and magnificence”.† To visitors of more sentiment than Defoe the overhanging lights on the evening of a concert or ball but revealed the brilliant scene below. “The ladies”, said a correspondent of *St. James’s Chronicle*,‡ “who vied in splendour with each other, I thought would never be tired of dancing, for some began on Monday and continued till Saturday night.” And so it was at the theatre. Tate Wilkinson, the actor and mimic, who at a later date sometimes played at York, was dazzled, he says, when his eyes turned towards the boxes; “and no wonder”, it is added in explanation, “for as London and Bath cull the choicest beauties from the three kingdoms, so does ancient York city at times allure them from Hull, Leeds, Doncaster, Wakefield, Pontefract, and every part of that noble, spacious and rich country”.|| It is quite easy to see why a young bachelor should have preferred York to a country parish tucked away in a forest clearing.

Among the young women with whom Sterne held sentimental converse at the Assembly Rooms and elsewhere was Miss Elizabeth Lumley, who was accustomed to come to York for the season. As Sterne eventually took Miss Lumley to wife, we should tell what may be gleaned of her and her kindred. When he first made her acquaintance, she was occupying genteel lodgings, with her waiting-maid, in Little Alice Lane, a narrow street which under another name still

* *York Courant* under various dates.

† *Tour of Great Britain*, III, 125-26 (London, 1738).

‡ August 26-28, 1766.

|| *Memoirs*, III, 144-45 (York, 1790).

winds away from the south of the Minster Yard to an archway marking one of the old gates to the Cathedral Close. Most of the buildings of the street were pulled down a half century ago; but the house where Miss Lumley was wont to take lodgings for the winter may perhaps be identified with St. William's College, originally an ecclesiastical foundation for chantry priests, and afterwards converted into dwellings. It is an ancient and curious structure rambling around a court-yard; while in front a half-timbered upper storey projects over one of stone into the street. The main entrance was by a door and wicket ornamented with beautiful tracery. It is a pleasing fancy, if nothing more, that Miss Lumley passed through that traceried doorway on the morning when she stepped over to the cathedral to become Mrs. Sterne. She could not boast, if casual references to her are to be believed, of the beauty that Tate Wilkinson and other visitors saw in the Yorkshire ladies. She was indeed "but a homely woman", yet possessing grace, vivacity, and a love for music and the diversions of society. She had been well bred, and "possessed", says the antiquary,* "a first rate understanding", which enabled her to help Laurie with his sermons. "She had many admirers", it is said further, "as she was reported to have a fortune". When Sterne began to pay court to her she was twenty-five or twenty-six years old—about a year younger than himself. It was altogether a fitting match, if a man so volatile as Sterne were ever to marry.

Miss Lumley belonged like himself to a good county family. Her father, the Rev. Robert Lumley, was the son of Robert Lumley, Gentleman, of Northallerton, a market-town in the North Riding, by Eleanor, daughter to John Hopton, Esq., of Armley, a suburb of Leeds. His grandmother, on the mother's side, was a sister of Thomas Rymer, the critic and historian. At the age of sixteen Robert Lumley, his father then deceased, entered Trinity College, Cambridge, as a pensioner, where he graduated, Bachelor of Arts in 1710-1, and Master of Arts four years later. Ordained deacon by

* John Croft, whose anecdotes of Sterne, to be frequently quoted, have been published by W. A. S. Hewins, *Whitefoord Papers*, 223-35 (Oxford, 1898).

the Archbishop of York on December 21, 1712, he seems to have obtained a curacy, though I have discovered no record of it, near Armley; most likely at Adel, a few miles to the northwest of the estate of his maternal grandfather. The little church at Adel, with its sculptured porch and chancel arch, is one of the loveliest survivals of Norman architecture in all England. Within the wide parish lay Cookridge Hall, the seat of Thomas Kirk, father and son, each of whom was known as "an ingenious gentleman, and virtuoso in all sorts of learning". They were both Fellows of the Royal Society. Cookridge was then famous in the district and beyond it for a "fine library and museum of antiquities" and for a park and wood laid out in "geometrical lines and centres". Thomas Kirk the younger died at the age of twenty-five, within a year and some months after his marriage to Lydia, daughter of Anthony Light, Esq., of London. Two years later—on September 24, 1711—the young widow took as her second husband Robert Lumley. Of the marriage were born two daughters, Elizabeth and Lydia, of whom the former was christened in the beautiful Norman church at Adel, October 13, 1714. This is the Elizabeth Lumley who lived to become the wife of Laurence Sterne. Her sister was a year or two younger. As if loth to give up the pleasant retirement, the family stayed on at Cookridge for nearly ten years.

But on January 12, 1720-1, Robert Lumley was admitted to the priesthood, at an unusually advanced period in life, by the Archbishop of York, preparatory to his appointment on October 16 to the vicarage of Bedale, near Northallerton and the home of his childhood. He was instituted to the rectory on the sixth of the following November. In this old market-town, consisting of one long and wide street with the church of St. Gregory at the upper end of it, he remained until near his death in January or February, 1731-2. Bedale was one of the richest livings in Yorkshire—worth nearly £2000 a year—and so the Lumleys "lived in style", giving Lydia and Elizabeth "a superior education", as might be expected of a mother who had enjoyed the comforts and luxuries of Cookridge Hall. It is impossible to follow the

migration of the family immediately after the death of the father. But Mrs. Lumley did not long survive her husband. On May 17, 1736, letters of administration of the father's estate were granted by the Prerogative Court of York to Elizabeth and Lydia Lumley, who are described in the preliminary application as spinsters living at Kendal, in Westmoreland. No inventory of the estate was returned. Soon after the loss of her mother, Lydia married the Reverend John Botham, a Trinity man and son of the vicar of the same name at Clifton-Campville in Staffordshire, where it may be the Lumleys also owned an estate. Mr. Botham was subsequently appointed to the rectory of Albury in Surrey. Lydia died on March 22, 1753, at the age of thirty-nine, and was buried in the ancient parish church within Albury Park. After the marriage of her sister, Elizabeth divided her time between Clifton-Campville and the pleasures of York, settling at length, as said above, for a part of the year under the shadow of the great minster.*

It took Sterne two years to win Miss Lumley. During the first months of the courtship, they shared together the amusements of York and sat down to many a "sentimental repast" in the seclusion of Little Alice Lane amid roses and jessamines. From some odd fancy they called their retreat D'Estella, perhaps in memory of Stella, the name by which Swift addressed Esther Johnson. The lovers had a confidante—just as one reads of in the novels of Samuel Richardson—disguised under the name of "the good Miss S——" who tried to help along the attachment to a successful issue. Miss Lumley, though she owned she liked Sterne from the first, held him off with the excuse that she was not rich

* Information concerning the Lumleys and the families into which they married lies scattered in *The Registers of the Parish Church of Adel* (volume V of *Thoresby Society Publications*, 1895); T. D. Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (1816); Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, edited by Whitaker (1816); *Register of Marriages in York Minster* (*Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*, II, 321); and Manning and Bray, *History * * * of Surrey*, II, (1809). An etching of the church at Adel is given by H. T. Simpson, *Archaeologia Adelsensis* (London, 1879). Likewise of Bedale, by H. B. M'Call, *The Early History of Bedale* (London, 1907). The present writer has been furnished with the entries with reference to Robert Lumley in the Admission Book of Trinity College and the diocesan registries of York and Chester.

enough or that he was too poor to think of marriage just then. At this stage in the courtship, Miss Lumley went to her sister's in Staffordshire for a long visit extending into the winter, I should say, of 1740-41. Letters of course now passed to and fro. "I wrote to her often", says Sterne. Four of his letters Miss Lumley kept by her through life, doubtless as the ones that pleased her especially well. No one ever wrote love-letters at all like them, except in imitation of them. They are studies in emotion, possessing the harmony and cadence of phrase and sentence that were to distinguish, a quarter-century later, the *Sentimental Journey* from all other English books.

In the first letter, Sterne, tired of the haunts of men, imagines for himself and Miss Lumley an earthly paradise where the polyanthus blooms in midwinter:

"Yes! I will steal from the world, and not a babbling tongue shall tell where I am—Echo shall not so much as whisper my hiding-place—suffer thy imagination to paint it as a little sun-gilt cottage, on the side of a romantic hill—dost thou think I will leave love and friendship behind me? No! they shall be my companions in solitude, for they will sit down and rise up with me in the amiable form of my L——. We will be as merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the arch fiend entered that undescribable scene.

"The kindest affections will have room to shoot and expand in our retirement, and produce such fruit as madness, and envy, and ambition have always killed in the bud.—Let the human tempest and hurricane rage at a distance, the desolation is beyond the horizon of peace.—My L. has seen a polyanthus blow in December—some friendly wall has sheltered it from the biting wind.—No planetary influence shall reach us, but that which presides and cherishes the sweetest flowers. God preserve us! How delightful this prospect in idea! We will build, and we will plant, in our own way—simplicity shall not be tortured by art—we will learn of nature how to live—she shall be our alchymist, to mingle all the good of life into one salubrious draught.—The gloomy family of care and distrust shall be banished from our

dwelling, guarded by thy hand and tutelar deity—we will sing our choral songs of gratitude, and rejoice to the end of our pilgrimage.

“Adieu, my L. Return to one who languishes for thy society.”

The second letter strikes a more personal note in the account of Sterne’s dreadful state after Miss Lumley’s departure to her sister. Sterne fell into a fever, and the confidante, hearing of it, tried to console with him, with the result that they both broke down under the pressure of their emotions. Sterne took Miss Lumley’s lodgings in Little Alice Lane during her absence, but he could neither eat nor sleep until Fanny, the house-maid, had braced his nerves with hartshorn :

“You bid me tell you, by dear L., how I bore your departure for S——, and whether the valley where D’Estella stands, retains still its looks—or, if I think the roses or jessamines smell as sweet, as when you left it—Alas! everything has now lost its relish and look! The hour you left D’Estella, I took to my bed.—I was worn out by fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which thou knowest well I have been wasting these two years—and shall continue wasting till you quit S——. The good Miss S——, from the forebodings of the best of hearts, thinking I was ill, insisted upon my going to her.—What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been able to see the face of this mutual friend, but I feel myself rent to pieces? She made me stay an hour with her, and in that short space I burst into tears a dozen different times—and in such affectionate gusts of passion, that she was constrained to leave the room, and sympathize in her dressing-room—I have been weeping for you both, said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity—for poor L.’s heart, I have long known it—her anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—her virtue as heroic—Heaven brought you not together to be tormented. I could only answer her with a kind look, and a heavy sigh—and returned home to your lodgings (which I have hired till your return), to resign myself to misery—Fanny had prepared me a supper—she is all attention to me

—but I sat over it with tears; a bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other—for the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me.—One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!—I gave a thousand pensive, penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, in those quiet and sentimental repasts—then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief, and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child.—I do so this very moment, my L.; for, as I take up my pen, my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L——. O thou! blessed in thyself, and in thy virtues—blessed to all that know thee—to me most so, because more do I know of thee than all thy sex.—This is the philtre, my L., by which thou hast charmed me, and by which thou wilt hold me thine, whilst virtue and faith hold this world together.—This, my friend, is the plain and simple magic, by which I told Miss —— I have won a place in that heart of thine, on which I depend so satisfied, that time, or distance, or change of everything which might alarm the hearts of little men, create no uneasy suspense in mine—Wast thou to stay in S—— these seven years, thy friend, though he would grieve, scorns to doubt, or to be doubted—’tis the only exception where security is not the parent of danger.—I told you poor Fanny was all attention to me since your departure—contrives every day bringing in the name of L. She told me last night (upon giving me some hartshorn), she had observed my illness began the very day of your departure for S——; that I had never held up my head, had seldom, or scarce ever, smiled, had fled from all society—that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily—that I neither eat, or slept, or took pleasure in anything as before—judge then, my L., can the valley look so well—or the roses and jessamines smell so sweet as heretofore? Ah me!—But adieu!—the vesper bell calls me from thee to my God!”

During the correspondence, Miss Lumley entered complaint against her lover and their common friends at York

that they were neglecting her. Letters, no doubt, as was Sterne's way, were not so frequent as they had been. In two letters Sterne pleaded for mercy at "the amiable tribunal" of pity, promising never to offend after. For her benefit he moralised prettily on the art of the coquette, the family affections, and the death of his dear friends. As an index to his reading at the time, we may observe, in addition to Eve's bower in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, an apparent allusion to *The Beggar's Opera* and a quotation from the *Essay on Man*, though not written out, as if Miss Lumley were thoroughly familiar with the moral essay of the great poet. Winter was breaking, he finally told Miss Lumley, and she must come to York for the Spring. "Return—return—" was the burden, "the birds of Yorkshire will tune their pipes, and sing as melodiously as those of Staffordshire".

The summons was heeded. What occurred afterwards Sterne himself related for his daughter Lydia. At her return, says the memoir, Miss Lumley "fell into a consumption—and one evening that I was sitting by her with an almost broken heart to see her so ill, she said, 'My dear Laurey, I can never be yours for I verily believe I have not long to live—but I have left you every shilling of my fortune;'—upon that she shewed me her will—this generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her in the year 1741". By that time Sterne had become, I dare say, fatigued by his courtship. He took Miss Lumley on the impulse of the moment, just as his father before him had taken the widow of a brother officer. The pathetic scene we have described, occurred, it is said, in the Assembly Rooms; "whence they went off directly * * * and were married". However that may be, the story closes with the terse record in the registry of York Minster that the Rev. Laurence Sterne and Miss Elizabeth Lumley of Little Alice Lane were married, under special license, on Easter Monday, March 30, 1741, by Richard Osbaldeston, Dean of the York Chapter. The romance which was thus quickly shuffled to a conclusion, like the last act of a play, had developed in Sterne a peculiar emotional state, to describe which he was

the first of all writers to employ the epithet sentimental.* Had he then possessed the motive and matter for it, he might have written his *Sentimental Journey*.

II

Straightway after marriage, Sterne prepared to occupy his living at Sutton-on-the-Forest; by midsummer he was settled there with his bride. The "little sun-gilt cottage on a romantic hill" that he had dreamed of in his correspondence with Miss Lumley proved to be "a large ruinous house", which could be rendered habitable only after "great repairs". Under his predecessor, the late Reverend John Walker, it had been totally neglected and was ready to fall. Sterne's income at this time was hardly eighty pounds a year, Sutton being estimated at forty pounds and Givendale at some odd pounds short. Out of that sum Sterne was paying a curate. His wife, true to her promise, placed in her husband's hands—his honour laid as surety—her fortune, which was referred to many years later as forty pounds a year. This additional income enabled Sterne to renovate his parsonage; but like others who have made over old houses, he found the expense of it greater than had been anticipated. When he had done with the repairs, he recorded his emotions, along with the items of cost, in the following entry on the inside of one of the covers to his parish registry:

| | £ | s | d | |
|---|----|----|---|----------------------|
| "Laid out in Sashing the House, | 12 | 0 | 0 | A. Dom. 1741 |
| "In Stukoing And Bricking the Hall | 4 | 16 | 0 | } L. Sterne Vicar |
| "In Building the Chair House | 5 | 0 | 0 | |
| "In Building the Parl'r Chimney | 3 | 0 | 0 | |
| "Little House | 2 | 3 | 0 | |
| "Spent in Shapeing the Rooms, Plastering, Underdrawing & Jobbery— | | | | |
| "God knows what —————" | | | | |

It is curious that Sterne should first appear as a jester in this old dog-eared parish book. The dash he drew across

* See, however, Boissy's *Le Français à Londres*, a one act prose comedy first performed in 1727. The heroine says of love that it is in England *un commerce de sentimens* (Scene II). From this it is not a far step to Sterne's "sentimental commerce" or "sentimental repasts."

the page on bringing the account to a close, leaving it to Omniscience to write in the long row of figures, is whimsical enough for *Tristram Shandy*. Mrs. Sterne's breeding also comes out here unexpectedly. She was to have her dwelling newly sashed after the latest style. The chair-house, too, was for her benefit, that she might keep a carriage for driving about the district or taking a wheel into York to visit her friends. After repairing and rebuilding, came "the entire furnishing" of the rectory at an expense of which Sterne complained, though he gave no details. Their house in order, the vicar and his wife began to lay out "pleasing walks", as they called them, "amid trees, shrubs, and flowers". They were also as curious as Mr. Walter Shandy "in wall-fruit and green gages especially". Their curate, the Reverend Mr. Wilkinson, as it is faithfully recorded in the parish registry, began the improvements by building an arbour, and planting twenty or more elm trees in the large house garden and the churchyard, a few of which may be still standing. Then followed further planting along with the necessary enclosures, the details of which Sterne set down in his own hand. The entries run:

"Mem^d That the Cherry Trees & Espalier Apple Hedge we planted in y^e Garden October y^e 9, 1742. The Nectarines and Peaches planted the same Day. The Pails set up two months before

"I Laid out in the Garden in y^e year 1742, the sum of £8 15s. 6d.

" L. Sterne

"Laid out in Inclosing the Orchard, & in Apple Trees,

£ sh d

&c—in y^e Year 1743, 5 0 0

Orchard y^e 28th day of October, 1743, by L. Sterne."

"The Apple Trees, Pear & Plumb Trees, planted in y^e During this period of planting and repairing, Sutton was visited by two hail-storms, the severity of which Sterne no

doubt playfully exaggerated, for we read in the parish book near the end:

“In the Year 1741

“Hail fell in the midst of Summer as big as a Pidgeon’s Egg, w^{ch} unusual Occurrence I thought fit to attest under my hand

L. Sterne

“In May 1745

“A dismal Storm of Hail fell upon this Town & upon some other adjacent ones, w^{ch} did considerable Damage both to the Windows & Corn. Many of the Stones measured six Inches in Circumference.

“It broke almost all the South & West Windows, both of this House and my Vicarage at Stillington.

L. Sterne”

When Sterne finished his improvements he had made out of Sutton a comfortable retirement, which was to be his home for nearly twenty years. The old rectory, subsequently burned to the ground, lay back from the road to the north, in an orchard of shrubs, fruit, and flowers of his own planting. If his wife’s fortune had been reduced by the expense of coming into the living, two important preferments more than made up for the loss. On December 26, 1741, the prebend of North Newbald fell vacant by the death of the Reverend Robert Hitch, who had “overheated himself”* in the recent election for members of Parliament. At a meeting of the York Chapter held on the fifth of the following January, Sterne resigned Givendale for the wealthier stall of North Newbald. The formal installation took place on January 8. Besides being worth fully £40 a year, the new prebend carried with it a house in Stonegate near the minster, which could be rented or used as a town residence.

Adjoining Sutton, two miles to the north, was the vicarage of Stillington, which fell to Sterne on the death of the

* Thomas Gent, the York printer, *Life*, 194-95 (London, 1832). Sterne is briefly described.

incumbent, Richard Musgrave, formerly curate of Marton. The little church, set high over the hamlet, looks much as it did in Sterne's time. The old box pews remain and the old gallery in the rear is still used. Of the new appointment Sterne said, "By my wife's means I got the living of Stillington—a friend of her's in the south had promised her, that if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living became vacant, he would make her a compliment of it." The friend in the south who exerted his influence for Sterne has been doubtfully identified with Thomas, Lord Fairfax, who soon afterwards settled in Virginia, where he became associated with the young George Washington. Be this as it may, the details of the appointment which enrolled Sterne among the small pluralists of the period, may be discovered in contemporary records. It is well to give them here. On February 27, 1743-4, the Dean and Chapter of York issued certificates to the Chancellor of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of York, praying that Sterne, known for his "good life and conversation" be permitted to hold Stillington along with Sutton. On March 3, the Archbishop of Canterbury signed the dispensation, "being moved by your supplications" and the general considerations that "the greater progress Men make in Sacred Learning, the greater in Encouragement they merit, and the more their Necessities are in daily Life, the more necessary supports of Life they require". It was stipulated that Sterne should preach thirteen sermons at Stillington every year, exercise hospitality for two months each year, and in his absence provide a minister for the parish in case the revenues were adequate for the purpose. The dispensation was confirmed by letters-patent of his Majesty on March 6. These preliminaries over, the Reverend Richard Levett, Prebendary of Stillington, who was the patron of the living, presented Sterne's name to Richard Osbaldeston, the Dean of York, who made the appointment on the thirteenth. The next day Sterne was formally inducted into the vicarage by Richard Hanxwell, Vicar of Sheriff-Hutton.*

* The Richard Levett who nominated him to the living also held a prebend at Southwell. He seems to have been the son of the vicar of the same name at Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, who graduated from

Stillington added to Sterne's resources another annual forty pounds. He could now live comfortably and at ease. So near was Stillington to Sutton that it was not necessary for him to engage a curate for the new parish. At the same time Mr. Wilkinson found another field of labour; and for several years Sterne either performed alone the duties of two parishes or employed curates who had not reached the dignity of a bishop's license. He had, however, a trustworthy and obedient parish-clerk, whom he facetiously called "my sinful Amen". It was Sterne's custom to preach at Sutton on Sunday morning and to stroll over to Stillington for an afternoon service, using very likely the same sermon, for Sterne was not the man to expend unnecessary energy upon his parishioners. Once, said the brother of the squire of Stillington, as Sterne "was going over the Fields on a Sunday to preach at Stillington, it happened that his Pointer Dog sprung a Covey of Partridges, when he went directly home for his Gun and left his Flock that was waiting for him in the Church in the lurch".

In the dispensation granting him the right to hold Stillington as well as Sutton, Sterne was styled "Chaplain to the Right Honourable, Charles, Earl of Aboyn", that is, to Charles Gordon, fourth Earl of Aboyne, then a young man only sixteen or seventeen years old. When or under what circumstances Sterne became connected with this ancient Scottish family there is, of course, no indication in the document itself. But Sterne had ample opportunity of meeting the Gordons, for they frequently, if not regularly, attended the York races in August. Mr. Sidney Lee thinks that he may have made the grand tour soon after his marriage in company with the young earl or with some near relation of his. The conjecture receives considerable support from *Tristram Shandy*. Before beginning that book, Sterne had probably travelled abroad. "Why are there so few palaces and gentlemen's seats," the elder Shandy is made to ask, "throughout so many delicious provinces in *France*? Whence

Christ's College, Oxford, in 1697, and subsequently served as curate to his father. Thus what little evidence we have points to Richard Levett, not to Lord Fairfax, as the friend to whom Sterne owed his preferment.

is it that the few remaining *Chateaus* amongst them are so dismantled,—so unfurnished, and in so ruinous and desolate a condition?" In another passage of the first book, Sterne speaks of the muleteer who "drives on his mule,—straight forward;—for instance, from *Rome* all the way to *Loretto*, without ever once turning his head aside either to the right hand or to the left". With the Low Countries Sterne showed perhaps greater familiarity. Uncle Toby, in giving orders for his fortifications on the bowling green, insisted on having the town "built exactly in the style of those of which it was most likely to be the representative:—with grated windows, and the gable ends of the houses, facing the streets, &c. &c.—as those in *Ghent* and *Bruges*, and the rest of the towns in *Brabant* and *Flanders*". It was in *Flanders*, too, where Yorick got an asthma in skating against the wind. And finally Yorick says, in excuse for not looking into Saxo Grammaticus for his descent from Hamlet's jester, "I had just time, in my travels through *Denmark* with Mr. *Noddy's* eldest son, whom, in the year 1741, I accompanied as governor, riding along with him at a prodigious rate, thro' most parts of *Europe*, and of which original journey performed by us two, a most delectable narrative will be given in the progress of this work; I had just time, I say, and that was all, to prove the truth of an observation, made by a long sojourner in that country;—namely, 'That nature was neither very lavish, nor was she very stingy in her gifts of genius and capacity to its inhabitants.' " From all this it may be surmised at least that after the races of 1741, Sterne left his bride at home and took a flying trip to the Continent with a stripling from the house of Gordon, renamed "Mr. Noddy's eldest son" in contempt for his intellect.

At most Sterne's absence abroad was not long enough to interfere materially with his plans for improving Sutton and making it his home. He was back by January. It is interesting to see cropping up, in his mode of life at this time, the ideals of the old squirearchy to which he belonged. Under different circumstances Sterne would have developed into another Simon or Richard of Halifax. The year of his marriage he was commissioned a justice of the peace, and

from enclosing and planting the garths about the rectory he branched out into miscellaneous farming for the increase of his winnings. Like most country parsons of his day, he looked after the collection and disposal of his tithes in kind, consisting of the corn and small tithes of Sutton and the hay of Huby, which belonged to his vicarage. He also cultivated the glebe of his benefice; and, not satisfied with this, he broke into his wife's fortune by purchasing a neighbouring farm, described in legal phrase as "a messuage and certain lands". In this undertaking Mrs. Sterne joined with the zest of her husband. "They kept", said the local antiquary who knew Sterne personally, "a Dairy farm at Sutton, had seven milch cows, but they allways sold their Butter cheaper than their Neighbours, as they had not the least idea of œconomy, [so] that they were allways behind and in arrears with Fortune." They also raised geese (which were regarded as Mrs. Sterne's perquisites) for the market and for presents to their friends, probably giving away as many as they sold.

Of Mrs. Sterne's "gooses", as he sometimes called them, that were permitted to run wild, Sterne occasionally wrote in pleasant humour. "My wife", runs a letter to a friend at York, "sends you and Mrs. Ash a couple of stubble geese—one for each; she would have sent you a couple, but thinks 'tis better to keep your other Goose in our Bean Stubble till another week. All we can say in their behalf is, that they are (if not very fat) at least in good health and in perfect *freedom*, for they have never been confined a moment." Just as Sterne here took his stubble geese as a theme for freedom, so in *Tristram Shandy* his experience in planting cabbages was turned to a defence of his digressive style. "I defy", it is said there, "the best cabbage planter that ever existed, whether he plants backwards or forwards, it makes little difference in the account (except that he will have more to answer for in the one case than in the other)—I defy him to go on coolly, critically, and canonically, planting his cabbages one by one, in straight lines, and stoical distances * * * without ever and anon straddling out, or sidling into some bastardly digression." As time went on, Sterne became occupied far more than he wished with his

farming, as may be seen in the following extract from a letter to his York friend:

“I would have wrote on Saturday, but in Truth, tho’ I had both Time and Inclination, my Servants had neither the one nor the other, to go a yard out of their Road to deliver it—They having set out with a Wagon Load of Barly at 12 o’clock, and had scarce day to see it measured to the Maltsman. I have four Thrashers every Day at work, and they mortify me with declarations, That there is so much Barly they cannot get thro’ that speces before Xmas Day, and God knows I have (I hope) near eighty Quarters of Oats besides. How shall I manage matters to get to you, as we wish for three months!”

Sterne’s dealings in land which made possible farming on so large a scale, may be uncovered in the office of the registry of deeds at Northallerton, where are kept the records for the North Riding. Conveyances to and from Sterne as there recorded, were mostly, after the custom of the time, in the form of lease and release. Unfortunately the original deeds were not engrossed in full, but only brief abstracts of them called memorials, which give merely such details as were necessary to identify the property in the conveyance. In no case is there, for example, an estimate of acreage; and whether a conveyance in a given case means an actual sale or a mortgage can only be conjectured, for there is never a statement to either effect. Besides all this, the record is evidently incomplete, as should be expected, for the conveyance by lease and release was originally a device to escape the expense and publicity of registration. Still, a shrewd guess, helped out by *Tristram Shandy* and a letter or two, leaves no doubt concerning Sterne’s actual purchases. The dairy-farm to which reference has been made, had formerly been in the tenure and occupation of one Richard Tindall, and consisted of a dwelling, other buildings, and various lands and closes. It was conveyed to Sterne by William Dawson and his wife Mary, of Farlington, a neighbouring village and parish, by lease and release, dated respectively the first and second days of November, 1744, the year after the planting of the rectory garden with apples, pears, and plums. There is in the

memorial no indication of its situation beyond the vague formula that it lay in "the Town Townfields, precincts, and Territorys of Sutton in the Forrest". But the farm was situated, as is evident from what will be said much later in the memoir, to the north of the road leading through the hamlet, and it may have actually adjoined the glebe of the parish.

The week following his purchase of the Tindall estate, Sterne bought three pieces of land from Richard Harland, Esq., the chief proprietor in the neighbourhood. They are described in the indenture bearing date November 10, 1744, as "one Stockiland lying in Murton Common field, * * * one land called a Hespole and Clockil Ings at the end of it, and another land called a Sankle Butt", all within the township of Sutton. The character of these lands and the uses to which they were to be put are sufficiently indicated by the local names attached to them. Murton was one of the six common fields of Sutton, which covered altogether thirteen hundred acres. The "stockiland" within it Sterne evidently desired as additional pasturage for those seven kine we wot of. What the word Hespole comes from I am not quite certain; but the alternative Clockil Ings is of course a corruption of Clockholm Ings, meaning a low-lying, marshy meadow, covered with flowered rushes, known locally as clocks or clockseaves. Sankle Butt, short for Sancome or Sankholm Butt, was likewise "a flat, spongy piece of ground", abutting upon some boundary. It is a safe inference that Sterne was about to coöperate with his neighbours in reclaiming the waste land of his parish, as well as to compete with them in huge crops of oats and barley.

The Tindall farm, supplemented by these meadows and pastures, comprised all the real estate that Sterne purchased at Sutton, though land was to come to him in another way to be related hereafter. In carrying through the purchases, Mrs. Sterne's available fortune was strained to the utmost, and additional capital was required, it would seem, for stocking the farm, for ditching, and for general improvements. At any rate, Sterne conveyed on the fifth and sixth of the following December the Tindall farm and perhaps the sup-

plementary fields and meadows to William Shaw, a merchant of the city of York. This conveyance was clearly by way of mortgage. The high hopes with which Sterne, having once purchased the land, set out on his career as farmer, is reflected in *Tristram Shandy*—in the account of the elder Shandy's "paring and burning, and fencing in the Ox-moor", "a fine, large, whinny, undrained, unimproved common". "It was plain", as Mr. Shandy worked out the account, "he should reap a hundred lasts of rape, at twenty pounds a last, the very first year—besides an excellent crop of wheat the year following—and the year after that, to speak within bounds, a hundred—but in all likelihood, a hundred and fifty—if not two hundred quarters of pease and beans—besides potatoes without end." How Sterne's hopes were dashed to the ground and how he cursed himself for his folly must be kept for a later period.

Leaving his farming out of the account, Sterne drew himself, as Vicar of Sutton, in the character of Parson Yorick. Not only is this the tradition, but John Hall-Stevenson, who knew Sterne best of all men, looked upon the portrait as essentially true, quoting from it himself, as the newspapers had often done, the year after his friend's death. Yorick's parish,—“a small circle described upon the circle of the great world, of four *English* miles diameter, or thereabouts”—was Sutton laid by the side of Stillington. The “large grange-house”, where “the good old body of a midwife” found hearty welcome, was the residence of the Harlands opposite the rectory. It was the parson's wife who established the notable woman in her profession, urging Yorick to procure the necessary license and recommending her to friends and acquaintances. Twice the midwife was summoned to the rectory. A daughter, named Lydia from Mrs. Sterne's mother and sister, was born and baptised on October 1, 1745, and was buried on the next day. Her place was taken by another Lydia, who was born and baptised on December 1, 1747. These records of the parish book, which touched Sterne so nearly, stand out prominently in his own hand, separated from the usual entries by the clerk and church wardens. Perhaps we should not take literally the account

Sterne gives of the thin and lean Yorick riding about his parish and among the neighbouring gentry on a broken winded pad as thin and lean as himself, drawing up, as he jogged along, “an argument in his sermon;—or a hole in his breeches”. “He never could enter a village”, says Sterne, “but he caught the attention of both old and young.—Labour stood still as he pass’d—the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well—the spinning-wheel forgot its round,—even chuck-farthing and shuffle-cap themselves stood gaping till he had got out of sight; and as his movement was not of the quickest, he had generally time enough upon his hands to make his observations,—to hear the groans of the serious,—and the laughter of the light-hearted;—all of which he bore with excellent tranquility.”

This sketch, which furnished the subject for one of Stothard’s graceful designs, is rather too elaborate and too much in the style of Cervantes for exact truth, to say nothing of its being an apparent imitation of a passage in Shakespeare’s *King John*. Still, tradition points in the Vicar of Sutton to a man who, especially when older, cared little for decorum. “So slovenly was his dress and strange his gait”, antiquary handed down to antiquary, “that the little boys used to flock around him and walk by his side.”

Sterne and Yorick were certainly one in temperament. Both were compounded of whims and humours; both were light-hearted and outspoken. When Sterne described Yorick at the age of twenty-six, he described himself also at the time when he entered upon the living at Sutton. Of Yorick, it is said:

“His character was,—he loved a jest in his heart. * * * he was as mercurial and sublimated a composition,—as heteroclite a creature in all his declensions;—with as much life and whim, and *gaieté de cœur* about him, as the kindest climate could have engendered and put together. With all this sail, poor *Yorick* carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world; and, at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping, unsuspecting girl of thirteen: So that upon his first setting out, the brisk gale of his spirits, as you

will imagine, ran him foul ten times in a day of somebody's tackling; and as the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way,—you may likewise imagine, 'twas with such he had generally the ill luck to get the most entangled. For aught I know there might be some mixture of unlucky wit at the bottom of such *Fracas*:—For, to speak the truth, *Yorick* had an invincible dislike and opposition in his nature to gravity;—not to gravity as such;—for where gravity was wanted, he would be the most grave or serious of mortal men for days and weeks together;—but he was an enemy to the affectation of it, and declared open war against it, only as it appeared a cloak for ignorance, or for folly; and then, whenever it fell in his way, however sheltered and protected, he seldom gave it much quarter.

“Sometimes, in his wild way of talking, he would say, That gravity was an errant scoundrel; and he would add,—of the most dangerous kind too,—because a sly one; and that he verily believed, more honest, well-meaning people were bubbled out of their goods and money by it in one twelve-month, than by pocket-picking and shop-lifting in seven. In the naked temper which a merry heart discovered, he would say, There was no danger,—but to itself;—whereas the very essence of gravity was design, and consequently deceit;—'twas a taught trick to gain credit of the world for more sense and knowledge than a man was worth; and that, with all its pretensions,—it was no better, but often worse, than what a *French* wit had long ago defined it,—*viz. A mysterious carriage of the body to cover the defects of the mind*;—which definition of gravity, *Yorick*, with great imprudence, would say, deserved to be wrote in letters of gold.

“But, in plain truth, he was a man unhackneyed and unpractised in the world, and was altogether as indiscreet and foolish on every other subject of discourse where policy is wont to impress restraint. *Yorick* had no impression but one, and that was what arose from the nature of the deed spoken of; which impression he would usually translate into plain *English* without any periphrasis,—and too oft without much distinction of either person, time, or place;—so that when mention was made of a pitiful or an ungenerous pro-

ceeding,—he never gave himself a moment's time to reflect who was the hero of the piece,—what his station,—or how far he had power to hurt him hereafter;—but if it was a dirty action,—without more ado,—The man was a dirty fellow,—and so on:—And as his comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a *bon mot*, or to be enliven'd throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to *Yorick's* indiscretion. In a word, tho' he never sought, yet, at the same time, as he seldom shunn'd occasions of saying what came uppermost, and without much ceremony;—he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour,—his gibes and his jests about him.—They were not lost for want of gathering."

Yorick's good counsellor *Eugenius*—that is, John Hall-Stevenson—was wont to warn him against his indiscretions, saying:

"Trust me, dear *Yorick*, this unwary pleasantry of thine will sooner or later bring thee into scrapes and difficulties, which no after-wit can extricate thee out of.—In these sallies, too oft, I see, it happens, that a person laugh'd at, considers himself in the light of a person injured, with all the rights of such a situation belonging to him; and when thou viewest him in that light too, and reckons up his friends, his family, his kindred and allies,—and musters up with them the many recruits which will list under him from a sense of common danger;—'tis no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes,—thou hast got an hundred enemies; and till thou has gone on, and raised a swarm of wasps about thine ears, and art half stung to death by them, thou wilt never be convinced it is so."

The only answer that *Yorick* would make to his friend's serious advice was "a pshaw!—and if the subject was started in the fields,—with a hop, skip, and a jump at the end of it; but if close pent up in the social chimney-corner, where the culprit was barricado'd in, with a table and a couple of arm-chairs, and could not so readily fly off in a tangent,—*Eugenius* would then go on with his lecture upon discretion." *Yorick* thought no ill could come of "mere jocundity of humour", of honest sallies in which there was no "spur

from spleen or malevolence''. But in this he was mistaken. As with Yorick so it was with Sterne in a less degree. Prudence, caution, discretion, the virtues that smooth one's way through life, were ever classed by him among the evil propensities of human nature; inasmuch as they check the spontaneous act and make one appear other than he really is. "I generally act", said Sterne, "upon first impulses", or "according as the fly stings". A sense of humour, held in restraint, is often a man's salvation in the affairs of practical life. But Sterne, a mere bundle of sensations, was overmastered by his humour. Delightful as he always was among friends who understood him, his jests and gibes were a source of annoyance to many people who were hard hit by them.

The clash came early with Philip Harland, his neighbour across the way, of whom Sterne wrote laconically just before his death: "As to the Squire of the parish, I cannot say we were upon a very friendly footing." The Harlands had emerged from the yeomanry in the seventeenth century. Of Richard Harland, Esq., who died in 1689, at the age of ninety-seven, a mural tablet in the parish church says: "He was a truly brave and honest man. He first engaged himself in that Troop of Noblemen and Gentlemen, associated to guard their Sovereign's Person at York, and had the Honour to serve as Lieutenant to that Body. The Civil Wars increasing, he adhered to the Royal Cause, in many Battles and Skirmishes, particularly with that fatal one of Marston Moor, he greatly distinguished himself; during the Usurpation, he with many other of the Unfortunate, suffered Fines and Imprisonment, untill the year 1660, when Monarchy, Religion, and Liberty were restored together." His grandson Richard, who had inherited the estate at Sutton and added largely to it, was among the most respected justices of the peace in the North Riding. It was of him that Sterne purchased several parcels of land already described. By the time Sterne came to Sutton, Richard Harland had settled at York as a counsellor at law, leaving the active management of his estate to his eldest son Philip, to whom it subsequently passed by will.*

* The will was signed July 31, 1747, and proved in the Prerogative Court at York, July 3, 1751. The *York Courant* (May 15) contained a glowing obituary notice.

Besides being in possession of the Grange, and another farm called Greenthwaite, and frontsteads and enclosures at Sutton, Philip Harland also held, under the Archbishop of York, a lease of the rectory and the greater tithes of the parish. Enough may be gleaned of him to warrant the statement that there was little or nothing in common between the squire and his vicar. First of all, they differed politically. Harland was a Tory who contributed liberally to the county hospital at York,* founded by Dr. John Burton, a violent leader of his party. Sterne was a Whig who never subscribed a shilling to the foundation, but ridiculed, as we shall see, the Tory physician and all that he stood for. The one was a man of practical affairs, dull and grave, while the other was a jester. The rubs and vexations that necessarily accompanied them in the business of the parish, are darkly hinted at in *Tristram Shandy* along with raillery of the squire's showy activities. "A hundred-and-fifty odd projects",—says Sterne of Mr. Walter Shandy, while doubtless thinking of Philip Harland—"A hundred-and-fifty odd projects took possession of his brains by turns—he would do this, and that, and t'other—He would go to *Rome*—he would go to law—he would buy stock—he would buy *John Hobson's* farm—he would new forefront his house, and add a new wing to make it even—There was a fine water-mill on this side, and he would build a windmill on the other side of the river in full view to answer it—But above all things in the world, he would inclose the great *Ox-moor*." In heedless talk like this Sterne was also ridiculing himself, but the stolid country squire would not understand that. Among other infirmities, the squire was accustomed to boast of his ancestry. It was he who erected in the parish church the monument to his great-grandfather, Richard Harland. Sterne, we may be sure, heard the high sounding phrases of the inscription many times before they were engraved in marble, and had them in memory when he set up an altercation between Walter Shandy and my Uncle Toby over the jack-boots that Sir Roger, their great-grandfather, wore at Marston Moor.

Sterne's other parishioners, who lived in "the odd houses

* *York Courant*, September 5, 1749.

and farms" about him, naturally took sides with the parson or the squire. Perhaps they had some real grievance against Sterne inasmuch as the products of his dairy were sold below the market price, then an offence for which one was liable to fine and jail. There was a large ear, or pond, over on Stillington Common, where, it is said, Sterne used to go for his skating, when the fly stung him that way. On one occasion "the Ice broke in with him in the middle of the Pond, and none of the Parishioners wou'd assist to extricate him, as they were at variance". Similar to this is the story which tells how Sterne narrowly escaped an attack from his parishioners: "Another time a Flock of Geese assembled in the Church Yard at Sutton, when his Wife bawl'd out 'Laurie, powl 'em,' i.e. pluck the quills, on which they were ready to riot and mob Laurie."

It would be a mistake to infer from these stories and whatever else has been said, that Sterne lived in perpetual quarrel with the squire of Sutton and his other parishioners. He lacked tact and "good management" in dealing with them; and they—steady-going farmers, moving along in the paths of ancient habit and custom—could not understand the variable temper of their parson. The result was friction which sometimes grated aloud. At times their common affairs surely went on smoothly. Many of the trees that adorned Sterne's orchard came, says the parish registry, from the park of Philip Harland. The vicar and the squire on one occasion laid aside all differences and joined hands in enclosing the common fields and meadows of the parish. The anecdotist speaks of pleasant gatherings at the rectory and at neighbouring houses, where Sterne performed on the bass-viol for his friends; and his wife, who "had a fine voice and a good taste in music", sometimes contributed to the entertainment by accompanying her husband on his favourite instrument.

The vicar and his wife loved best to visit with the Crofts at Stillington Hall, whose friendship more than made up for the antipathies that existed between them and the Harlands. The Crofts, said Sterne in recollection of those days, "shewed us every kindness—'twas most truly agreeable to be within

a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends''. The Crofts were an old Yorkshire family of merchants and aldermen that had been associated with Sterne's own kin for more than a century. One of Sterne's ancestors, Roger Jaques, Lord Mayor of York, was knighted, it will be remembered, by Charles the First in 1639. Two years later the king was again at York, where he was entertained by the new Lord Mayor, Christopher Croft, whom he also knighted before leaving the city. From this Sir Christopher, the founder of the family, was descended Sterne's friend, Stephen Croft. Born on December 8, 1712, less than a year before Sterne, Stephen Croft, as a young man, went out to Oporto, where he was engaged with others of his family in the wine-trade. On the death of his father in 1733, he inherited the lordship of Stillington and a large estate—various lands and messuages—in the parish. He still kept up, after Sterne settled at Sutton, his connection with the factory at Oporto, but he then resided for the most part on his manor. His "amiable" wife, named Henrietta, was a daughter of Henry Thompson of Kirby Hall, Little Ouseburn, a few miles across the country on the way to Knaresborough.

There was also a younger brother, John Croft, who "grew up" at Stillington, and afterwards went to Portugal to make his fortune. He remembered Sterne well; and after coming back to York and turning antiquary, he wrote of him the anecdotes from which we have quoted liberally. Sterne was, he said, "a constant Guest at my brother's Table". The two men, Stephen Croft and Laurence Sterne, of the same age and of similar family connections, grew to be most congenial companions. The one brought to their common friendship jests innumerable; the other, the tales and adventures that come to a man of the world. Beyond this, Sterne took the Crofts into his confidence, telling them what books he read and studied most in forming his style; and there by the fireside of Stillington Hall, he read the first chapters of *Tristram Shandy* while it was in manuscript. But for Stephen Croft the sheets would have gone into the fire instead of to the printer.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND HONOURS

1741-1750

THE country parson was also a prebendary of York, who took an active part in the politics and intrigues within and without the Cathedral Close, at a time when the entire nation was stirred by civil and religious commotions. And yet, notwithstanding his activity, this is the obscurest phase of Sterne's life after he reached man's estate. We know that he found time, in the midst of farming and parish business, to enter the thick of Yorkshire politics, but for following him in his courses there are very few clues, direct and trustworthy. General inference from his character and the position he occupied in the Church of York must be at times our main guide. If our narrative, in consequence of this, now diverges in places from Sterne himself, it will at least bring into view the men with whom he touched elbow as friend and enemy; it will explain, too, some of his opinions and prejudices, and furnish the background to the inevitable breach with his uncle and mother.

On first coming to York, Sterne allied himself with the men whose voices were most potent in the diocese and chapter. The see was then occupied by Lancelot Blackburne, an old man above eighty years of age, "the jolly old Archbishop of York"—Horace Walpole called him—"who had all the manners of a man of quality". Like Sterne, the aged prelate was a wit and humourist whose career in the Church had been accompanied by ballads and anecdotes charging him with gay immoralities. It was he who collated Sterne to the vicarage of Sutton. The Dean of the Chapter was Richard Osbaldeston, then about fifty years old, a Cambridge man and sometime chaplain to George the Second. It was he who issued the mandate for Sterne's induction to Stillington. To him Sterne

dedicated his first printed sermon "in testimony of the great respect which I owe to your character in general; and from a sense of what is due to it in particular from every member of the Church of York". But the man behind the throne, to whom Sterne really owed his first preferments, was of course his "rich and opulent uncle", Dr. Jaques Sterne, Precentor to the Cathedral and Archdeacon of Cleveland, to slip over his several other titles. The old archbishop dying in 1743, he was succeeded by Thomas Herring, a handsome and dignified ecclesiastic in the very prime of life. A graduate of Jesus College, the year before Dr. Sterne, he subsequently gained reputation as an eloquent preacher at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, especially for sermons on the corrupt state of contemporary manners and a denunciation of the *Beggar's Opera*, a kind of writing unknown to "the venerable sages of antiquity". It was reserved for the moderns, said the preacher, to discover in "a gang of highwaymen and pickpockets a proper subject for laughter and merriment".* Afterwards Dean of Rochester and Bishop of Bangor, he proved an able administrator, and was duly elevated, as aforesaid, to the see of York.

The new archbishop and Dr. Sterne were much alike in temper and opinion; and both were men of tremendous energy. From the first they joined hands in support of Whig policies through thick and thin and against all Roman Catholics, real or imaginary. The year 1745, when Charles Edward Stuart returned to claim his own, was a strenuous period for them. On July 24 the bold Pretender landed with a few friends in the Hebrides, and on August 19, unfurled his banner at Glenfinnan. After collecting a small army of Highlanders, he marched to Perth, where he rested for reinforcements and to discipline his troops. He then proceeded to Edinburgh, and met the English at Preston Pans on September 21, rushing upon them with a yell through the mists of morning and cutting them utterly to pieces. He subsequently crossed the English border, forced the

* See appendix to *Letters from Dr. Thomas Herring to William Duncombe* (London, 1777), containing two letters to the *Whitehall Evening Post* on the *Beggar's Opera*, dated March 30 and April 20, 1728.

capitulation of Carlisle, marched south through Penrith, Kendal, and Lancaster into Derbyshire, where he was checked and turned backwards into Scotland. The last scene of all was the terrible carnage of the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden on April 16, 1746, whence the prince fled, a fugitive among the mountains and islands to the west. At York, as at other towns in the north, the events of '45 threw the people into consternation. For a time shops were closed and all business was suspended. Archbishop Herring sounded the alarm to the nation in a sermon preached in the cathedral on September 22, the day after the defeat at Preston Pans. This sermon was preparatory to a plan that the archbishop had been maturing for some weeks for uniting the people of Yorkshire into an association for "the security of his Majesty's Person and government and for the defence of the county of York". On September 24, the nobility, clergy, and gentry met at the ancient castle of York, where the archbishop presented the articles of association in an eloquent speech,* giving "the reasons of our present assembling". The commotions in Scotland, it was claimed, were but a part of a general design concerted for the ruin of England by France and Spain, "our savage and bloodthirsty enemies". The clergy of the diocese were especially commanded "to instruct and animate" their congregations "to stand up against Popery and Arbitrary Power under a French and Spanish government". By the archbishop's exertions a defence fund was collected amounting to £31,364, to which Jaques Sterne contributed £50. "Laurence Sterne, clerk", it is recorded, "subscribed and paid £10. 10s." and collected from his two parishes £15. 14s. 6d.†

Next to the archbishop, the church politician most active at York in 1745 and immediately thereafter was Dr. Jaques Sterne. When the Duke of Cumberland returned from the victory of Culloden, stopping on his way south at York, where

* *A Speech made by his Grace, the Lord Archbishop of York, at Presenting an Association enter'd into at the Castle of York (London, 1745).*

† *An Exact List of the Voluntary Subscribers, with the sums each subscrib'd and paid for the Security of his Majesty's Person and Government (York, 1747).*

he was granted the freedom of the city, he stayed, at his own request, with the precentor in the Minster Yard instead of with Archbishop Herring or the Lord Mayor. This compliment to Dr. Sterne is significant of the value that the government attached to his services. His sermons and addresses at the time, to say the truth, rather surpassed the archbishop's in fire and savage denunciation of the Pretender, Jacobites, and Roman Catholics. Especially notable is the charge that Dr. Sterne delivered to his clergy at Thirsk, a few miles from Sutton, and in other parishes of his archdeaconry, during his visitations of 1746. It was printed at York the next year under the title of *The Danger arising to our Civil and Religious Liberty from the Great Increase of Papists, and the Setting up Public Schools and Seminaries for the Teaching and Educating of Youth in the pernicious Tenets and Principles of Popery*. In this pamphlet, which was dedicated to the archbishop as the author of "that glorious Association * * * against the united Force of Popery and Rebellion", the archdeacon sought to revive the old laws of the time of Elizabeth and William the Third against saying or hearing Mass, proselyting, and Roman Catholic schools. After a brief account of the abominations of Popery, it was carefully and minutely explained to the clergy how they and the church wardens might bring all recusants in their parishes to the bar of justice for fine and imprisonment.

As if in further explanation of how it should be done, Dr. Sterne himself proceeded against the so-called "Popish Nunnery" at York. Many of the oldest and wealthiest families of Yorkshire were still Roman Catholics, and some of them had given either open or secret support to the House families were accustomed to keep residence on their estates of Stuart, both in 1715 and in 1745. Several of these county in the country during the summer, and to come into York for the winter, living in large and fine houses with lavish hospitality in Micklegate, the muckle or great street of the city. In a narrow street branching off from Micklegate Bar, they established, in 1686, a boarding-school for their daughters, and placed in charge of it a Mrs. Paston. The little street outside Micklegate Bar soon got the name of Nunnery Lane,

and the old brick house where the school was kept became known as the Nunnery. Over this institution the Church of York was at times very uneasy. In 1714, Mrs. Paston, like other Roman Catholics in Micklegate ward, refused to take the oath of allegiance to George the First, and in consequence her school was closely watched for some time. But everything became quiet in the course of a few years until the disturbances of 1745 and thereafter. Then Dr. Sterne made up his mind to put an end to this "Popish Seminary, set up for poisoning the minds of the King's Subjects". Two old women then in charge of the school, one of whom was styled "the Abbess", were summoned before an ecclesiastic court and convicted of recusancy. They were admonished and fined twelve pence a Sunday.* Not satisfied with this mild punishment, Dr. Sterne proceeded against them under the laws against saying or hearing Mass and against a Papist's engaging in the education or boarding of youth. The cause dragged on in the courts until 1751, when it was dropped. Throughout it all the "pious Doctor" was bantered a good deal on his "rough methods of making Converts of the Ladies" and on "his stale Ecclesiastical tricks". What he imagined, in the blindness of his zeal, as a nunnery, was a quite harmless boarding-school which flourished long afterwards without molestation.

Dr. Sterne's aide-de-camp, so to speak, during this period was his nephew, Laurence Sterne. But of what the young man did in the humble capacity, there are, as has been said, no contemporary records. His deeds redounded to the credit or discredit of his uncle. This part of his life can not be uncovered in satisfactory detail. And yet a hint or indication, a tradition, and a chance phrase dropped by Sterne among friends in later life, are sufficient for a true relation so far as it goes. Laurence Sterne was no doubt initiated into York politics during the midsummer of 1741, when occurred the general election that resulted in the retirement of Sir Robert Walpole. At York the contest between Whig and Tory was waged with a bitterness unknown for many years. In the poll-books published afterwards, each party accused the other of under-

* *York Courant*, Oct. 3, 1749.

hand and disgraceful methods of securing votes, hinting, though not openly charging, bribery. Against the Tories, a large and influential body containing a majority of the country gentlemen, were marshalled the clergy in compact and solid ranks, under the leadership of Dr. Sterne and other ecclesiastics of high place. Notwithstanding the most strenuous effort, the Whigs barely succeeded in electing one of their candidates to the new Parliament, though he had represented York for twenty years and had just been appointed one of the lords of the admiralty. Their second candidate was left far behind in the polling by the two Tories. What that fierce contest meant for the minor clergy and the understrappers may be inferred from a brief record to which reference has been already made. The Reverend Robert Hitch, Canon and Prebendary of North Newbald, "a fine tall personage", said Thomas Gent, a York printer and bookseller, "overheated himself about obtaining votes for Parliament, that threw him into a mortal fever, which * * * conveyed his precious soul, I hope, into the regions of a blessed immortality".* That Laurence Sterne, then Prebendary of Givendale, likewise performed services deemed worthy of reward, seems quite clear, though there is no mention of them; for within ten days after the death of Mr. Hitch, he was preferred to the comfortable prebend so opportunely left vacant.

Though Sterne likely engaged in the open solicitation of votes as well as his predecessor who lost his life thereby, his main services to his church and party at this time and in succeeding years were performed by his facile pen. To this effect we have direct, if vague, statements. "In his younger years", so runs a letter of John Croft respecting Sterne, "he was a good deal employed by his Uncle in writing political Papers and Pamphlets in favour of Sir Robert Walpole's Administration". "We have heard", said the *Monthly Review* for October, 1775, "of his writing a periodical electioneering paper at York in defence of the Whig interest". *St. James's Chronicle*, in its issue of April 10, 1788, had a longer version of the same story, which, the correspondent claimed, Sterne once told to a friend. "He wrote", it is said

* Thomas Gent, *Life*, 194-95.

there, "a weekly paper in Support of the Whigs during the long Canvass for the great Contested election, * * * and he owed his Preferment to that Paper—so acceptable was it to the then Archbishop". The essential truth of these traditions is confirmed by Sterne himself in his brief autobiography, wherein he says "my uncle * * * quarrelled with me * * * because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers".

The only regularly printed newspaper at York was *The York Courant*, then issued every Tuesday. Though not violently partisan in ordinary times, it was owned and conducted by a Tory, Cæsar Ward, the printer and bookseller in Coney Street, who practically closed the columns of his newspaper to the Whigs during excited canvasses and the Jacobite insurrection, turning it into a Tory organ. Only by browbeating, was Dr. Sterne then able to get his paragraphs inserted into the *Courant*. Under these circumstances it was necessary for him and his party to print and issue pamphlets and temporary sheets. To this work the nephew of Dr. Sterne would be expected to contribute his share. Of the pamphlets that Laurence wrote at this time, none have yet been identified; and we can not place our finger upon any paragraph in the newspapers as surely his. But there is a clue to the temporary sheet in which he probably bore a hand. The Whig printer at York from 1742 to 1752 was John Gilfillan. At his press in Coffee Yard were printed the *List of the Voluntary Subscribers * * * for the Defence of the County of York* and the various archidiaconal charges of Dr. Sterne. On the title-page of the *List*, bearing date 1747, is an announcement beneath the name of John Gilfillan, that at his shop "may be had the News-paper call'd *The York Journal, or the Protestant Courant*". Two years before this—on January 22, 1744-5, according to a minute of the House of Commons—"John Gilfillan, printer of the *York Courant*, was ordered to attend for an article reflecting on Admiral Vernon, a member of the House".* In designating the journal that had offended, the clerk either made a mistake or purposely abbreviated its long title, for Gilfillan never had anything

† Smith's *Old Yorkshire*, new series, II, 191 (1890).

to do with the Tory *York Courant*. No copy of Gilfillan's newspaper, so far as is known, now exists; but Robert Davies, a York antiquary of the last century, met with one of Gilfillan's advertisements descriptive of his aim. The little sheet was to contain "the earliest, best, and most authentic accounts of any in the North of England; and, being entirely calculated for the service of the King and country, he hoped it would meet with encouragement from all who wished well to the present happy establishment in church and state".† With this newspaper, set up probably in 1745, by a Whig printer under the patronage of the Church of York, Laurence Sterne was undoubtedly closely connected; not perhaps as editor, but as a leading contributor by direction of his uncle.

It may be just surmised, if nothing more, that the easy paragraph-writer was the author of various letters to London newspapers, during the Jacobite alarm, descriptive of doings at York, of arrests, trials, and executions of those unfortunate gentlemen who joined the Pretender's army. "On Saturday last", to quote a sentence here and there from the York correspondent to the *London Evening Post* for November 6-8, 1746, "On Saturday last eleven of the Rebels under Sentence of Death * * * were brought from the Castle in three Sledges. * * * They walked up to the Gallows without the least Concern, where they prayed very devoutly. After which Capt. Hamilton mounted the ladder first, Frazier next, and the rest in order. * * * One of them said he died because his K—g was not upon the T—e. * * * Captain Hamilton was the first whose heart was cut out. * * * We hear that Sir David Murray, Bart. and fifty-two more have received Notice of Execution for next Saturday."

In this dreadful work of hunting out the Jacobites and bringing them to the bar of justice, no one was more zealous than Dr. Sterne. He was so ready, as a magistrate of the West Riding, to issue a warrant for commitment on vague and hearsay evidence, that the Secretary of State thought it necessary on one occasion to reprimand him. Two cases of his dealings with well-known Tory physicians of York are of especial interest here. One is that of Dr. Francis Drake, the

* Davies, *Memoir of the York Press*, 323-24 (London, 1868).

distinguished antiquary and historian, who refused the oaths in 1745. Before and after his arrest and release, he assailed "Parson St—e" in paragraph after paragraph contributed to the *York Courant*, holding up to scathing ridicule the precentor's career in religion and politics. In reply Dr. Sterne, who was not permitted to employ the local newspaper, had recourse to "virulent advertisements", which circulated among the coffee-houses and passed on from hand to hand. Whether his nephew collaborated on these satirical pamphlets, we do not presume to know; all that can be said is that he was then writing for his uncle. The second case is that of Dr. John Burton, author and antiquary, who was also suspected of Jacobitism. In Dr. Sterne's long persecution of this able physician, Laurence was closely involved. His hatred and contempt for the high-flying Tory amounted to an obsession falling little short of insanity. Pilloried again and again in *Tristram Shandy*, Dr. Burton *alias* Dr. Slop is never dropped except to be pilloried a few pages on.

Three years younger than Laurence Sterne, Burton graduated, Bachelor of Medicine, from St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1733, and immediately began the practice of medicine at Heath, a Yorkshire village near Wakefield. The next year came on a contested election for the county, in which "the greatest exertions were made by the friends and opponents of Walpole". To the young physician, who espoused the Tory side with vehemence, was entrusted the entire charge of the electors of Wakefield, where "he was very active and vigilant in the discharge of his duties". "On the fourth day of the poll", it is said further, "he conducted a body of freeholders to York", saw to it that they voted, and then watched at a booth till the voting was over. The contest resulted in the return of one member on each side. Dr. Burton's candidate, Sir Miles Stapleton, headed the poll; and Mr. Cholmley Turner, whose canvass was conducted, as was said earlier, by Dr. Sterne, came in second. But for the pernicious activity of the physician of Wakefield, the Whigs would have easily elected both of their candidates.

The election over, Dr. Burton married a small heiress and went abroad to complete his medical education. He took the

degree of M.D. at Rheims and attended the clinics of the great Boerhaave at Leyden. On his return he settled permanently at York "as physician and man-mid-wife", where he soon became very popular with the poorer classes, for he treated them free of charge, and founded, with the aid of wealthy friends, a hospital for the city and county of York, which was known among his political enemies as the Tory Infirmary. Meanwhile Dr. Burton had appeared in print. His first effort, which shows the way his studies were tending, was *An Account of a Monstrous Child*, a tract contributed to the *Edinburgh Medical Essays* for 1736. This was followed two years later by *A Treatise on the Non-naturals*, which excited the mirth of the author of *Tristram Shandy*, who enquired of the doctor "why the most natural actions of a man's life should be called his non-naturals".

Political animosities, which had long been smouldering, again broke out violently in the election of 1741. Dr. Burton again became conspicuous and repeated his success of 1734; whereupon he was subjected, according to his own narrative, to all sorts of abuse and calumny from the Whigs in general and from Dr. Sterne in especial. When, for example, Dr. Burton, who was living at that time in Coney Street, applied to the Corporation for a more respectable residence in the centre of the city, his political enemies interfered and tried to prevent the lease. He however obtained the large house that he desired, and went on with his profession, giving more and more attention to obstetrics, which, as a new science, exposed him to the ridicule of a large body of men and women who were content to have their children brought into the world after the old ways practised by the midwives.

The year 1745 was now at hand and Dr. Sterne had his revenge. On November 22, news reached York that the vanguard of the Highlanders was at Kendal. The inhabitants of York were alarmed lest the rebels should enter Yorkshire and march on to the city. Dr. Burton, who owned two farms near Settle, in the West Riding, not far from the borders of Lancashire, received permission from the Lord Mayor to post west to look after his estates, which seemed to be in danger. The rebels, however, took a route to the left

of his property, leaving his tenants unharmed. After this discovery, the doctor went on to the village of Hornby in the North Riding, where he was taken prisoner, while being shaved at his inn, by a party of Highlanders, who entertained him at the castle and then conveyed him south to Lancaster. After a few days' detention, he was dismissed with a pass for his safety. On reaching York, he was met by his enemies, to whom had come rumours of his movements. He was immediately—it was November 30—brought before Thomas Place the recorder, and Dr. Jaques Sterne, a magistrate for the West Riding, who issued a warrant for his commitment to York Castle as “a suspicious person to his Majesty’s government”. During the examination, Dr. Sterne, the unfortunate physician alleged, “made a great Blustering, and talked much, but it was *vox et præterea nihil*; he was often in such a Hurry with Party Fury, that he could not utter his words for *vox faucibus haesit*, and he presently foamed at the Mouth especially when I laughed at him and told him, that I set him and all his Party at Defiance, unless false witnesses were to appear, which I own, I was not altogether without Apprehensions about”.*

Of what took place on that occasion and subsequently, Dr. Sterne published three brief accounts in the newspaper that he was then managing at York, presumably in the *York Journal and Protestant Courant*. These notices, it has been asserted, though without positive evidence, were written by his nephew. The first of them was sent up to *The London Evening Post*, where it appeared in the issue of December 5-7. This paragraph, in the form of a letter from York, dated December 3, has great interest as most likely from the pen of Laurence Sterne. It runs as follows:

“On Saturday last Dr. *Burton* was committed to the Castle, by the Recorder and Dr. *Sterne*, as Justices for the West Riding of this county. It appearing from his own Confession, that he went from Settle to *Hornby*, knowing the Rebels were there, and upon a Supposition that the Duke

* For the whole transaction, see *Burton*, *British Liberty Endangered* (London, 1749); and Robert Davies, *A Memoir of John Burton*, in the second volume of *The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*.

of *Perth* was there, wrote a Letter to him, which being opened by Lord *Elcho*, he was sent for up by two *Highlanders* to the Castle, and, as he says, carried along with them as a *Prisoner* to *Lancaster*, where he convers'd with Lord *George Murray*, and a Person there call'd his *Royal Highness Prince Charles*. There was the greatest Satisfaction expressed at his Commitment, from the highest to the lowest Person in the City, that has been known here upon any Occasion."

A few days later, Burton applied for release on bail. This was refused by Dr. Sterne and three other magistrates, and a further charge was preferred against Burton on the information of one John Nesbitt, a prisoner in the castle. A new warrant of detainer was issued with an order to the jailer not to admit the doctor to bail, as the new evidence amounted to a charge of high treason. Dr. Burton lost his place on the hospital board and it seemed as if he would be tried and hanged. But just before the assizes, the Secretary of State intervened with an order that the prisoner be conveyed up to London for examination before the Privy Council. He was detained for a full year—till March 25, 1747—when he was summoned to the Cockpit and discharged. While in London, Dr. Burton conversed with several gentlemen who had fought on the Pretender's side at Culloden, and afterwards wrote out what he learned from them, in a little book entitled *A Genuine and True Journal of the Most Miraculous Escape of the Young Chevalier* (1749). By this time, too, he had begun, under the influence of Dr. Drake, his studies in archæology, which resulted in the *Monasticon Eboracense, or the Ecclesiastical History of Yorkshire* (1758), a monument to patient labour and research. After his release, Dr. Burton resumed his practice and professional studies at York, publishing in 1751 *An Essay toward a Complete New System of Midwifery*, and two years later *A Letter to William Smellie, M.D.* of Glasgow, violently attacking the Scotch physician's theory and practice of midwifery. Thereafter he was known among his enemies as "Hippocrates Obstetricius".

Despite one's sympathy with the York physician in his long persecution, he was, to say the truth, very indiscreet in his conduct. Not a Jacobite and Papist surely, his extreme

Toryism exposed him to a suspicion of being both, at a time when passions ran so high that little distinction could be made between a Tory and a Jacobite and none at all between a Jacobite and a Papist. It was then, to quote the doctor himself, "tantamount to downright Disaffection, to assert that the young Chevalier has not a Cloven foot, or something monstrous about him". It must be said, in justice to the two Sternes, that the physician excited disgust among many others with whom he came into conflict, for he was obstinate, noisy, and meddlesome. An elaborate story got into print about a fracas that occurred at the inauguration dinner given by Henry Jubb, an apothecary, on being elected sheriff of York in the autumn of 1754. The dinner was held at the sheriff's house in Micklegate. There were present the Lord Mayor, who presided according to custom, several aldermen, and other leading citizens including the York physician. Dr. Burton did not rise with the rest when the Lord Mayor proposed a toast "To the glorious and immortal memory of King William the Third"; and in consequence hot words passed across the table. Mr. George Thompson, a Whig wine-merchant, by that time "warmed with the convivial glass", just slightly filliped a cork towards the doctor in way of derision; and a few minutes afterwards tried to compel him to drink "Everlasting disappointment [or "damnation", Dr. Burton said] to the Pretender and all his adherents". Burton said that he had religious scruples against drinking damnation to anybody. "A most extraordinary scene of riot and disorder ensued". The guests jumped upon the table; the doctor brandished his cane right and left, levelling to the floor two gentlemen, one of whom "collared him, tore his shirt and scratched his neck". At length an attorney-at-law wrested the weapon from Burton and threw it into the fire. The scuffle ended with the forcible ejection of the infuriated physician.*

The name of Laurence Sterne does not appear in the list of distinguished guests who attended this "entertainment",

* See *An Account of What Passed between Mr. George Thompson of York and Dr. John Burton* * * * at Mr. Sheriff Jubb's Entertainment (London, 1756).

as it was mildly called, at Mr. Sheriff Jubb's. But whether present or not, he shared in the violent hostility of his party towards Dr. Burton. We can not say when and where Sterne and Burton first came into conflict. We can only point to the contested election of 1741 and the proceedings against the physician in 1745-46, as the probable occasions, at a time when the young prebendary was closely associated with his uncle in electioneering and paragraph-writing. Burton's books on midwifery he read, and laughed at them. No sooner was *Tristram Shandy* out than everybody at York knew that Dr. Slop and Dr. Burton were one. As if to make the identification perfectly clear, Sterne paraphrased an amusing passage in Burton's attack on Dr. William Smellie of Glasgow; wherein the Scotch physician was accused of converting the drawing of a petrified child in an old medical treatise into a full-fledged author, who of course had never existed.* Dr. Burton, as he appears under the name of Dr. Slop, was the bungling man-midwife to whom *Tristram Shandy* owed his broken nose. In appearance the *accoucheur*, as he wished to be called, was a "little squat, uncourtly figure * * * of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a serjeant in the horse-guards". It was his custom to ride "a little diminutive pony, of a pretty colour—but of strength—alack!—scarce able to have made an amble of it, under such a fardel". Slung at the doctor's back might be seen a "green bays bag", in which jingled, as he rode along, his new-invented "instruments of salvation and deliverance". Dr. Slop runs through *Tristram Shandy*, an ill-tempered, ill-mannered, and vulgar Papist, the butt of all the current jests and prejudices against Roman Catholics.

Sterne's frightful caricature of an able physician and learned antiquary is unexplainable without reference to the

* "If any thing can be added to shock human Faith, or prejudice your Character as an Historian or Translator, it is your having converted *Lithopaedii Senonensis Icon*, (which you call *Lithopedus Senonensis*) an inanimate, petrified Substance, into an Author, after you had been *six years cooking up your Book*."—*Letter to Smellie*, p. 1 (London, 1753). Compare *Tristram Shandy*, footnote to ch. XIX, bk. II.

fierce religious passions awakened by the events of 1745, when every church, from the Cathedral of St. Peter's to the remotest parish, rang with denunciations of Rome and all her ways. Archbishop Herring set the pace for his clergy when he announced from the pulpit that "no nation * * * can possibly be happy under Popery", for "it sinks the spirits of men and damps the vigour of life", and then went on to ascribe the dreadful state of society to contamination with "a Popish abjured Pretender". "Things every Day", declared the preacher, waxing eloquent in his rhetoric, "Things every Day proceed from bad to worse: Magistracy is contemned, Dignity and Order sunk to the common Level, Adultery and vagrant uncleanness is become an epidemical evil."* This cry was taken up by the archdeacons and carried to the country parsons. Sterne, like the rest, heeded the call. He was at York Castle, we may count upon it, when the clergy and gentry entered into the association for the defence of Yorkshire, and at Thirsk when his uncle laid bare the abuses and horrors of the Church of Rome. His own sermons, such as without doubt belong to this period, might have been written, so far as their tone is concerned, either by the archbishop or by the archdeacon. The point of difference is but one of style. Neither of the men in higher place defined Popery, with reference to penances and indulgences, quite so neatly as Sterne when he called it "a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking". He preached eloquently against the Mass and its mummeries, auricular confession, the arts of the Jesuits, and "the cruelties, murders, rapine, and bloodshed" that have ever accompanied Rome in her history. The long wars of his time, the high tax rate in consequence of them, and the pestilence that swept over the cattle after the insurrection of 1745, leaving "no herd in the stalls", he regarded as the last judgment of the Almighty upon a people who had forgotten the ways of righteousness, and were listening to the seductions of Jesuit missionaries.

* *A Sermon Preached at Kensington on Wednesday, the Seventh of January* (London, 1747).

It was a red-letter day in the life of the young prebendary when he rose into the pulpit of St. Peter's before a large and distinguished congregation, and drew for them the portrait of a victim of the Inquisition. "Behold", spoke the preacher as if out of a romance, "Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet,—there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment.—Hark!—What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to the tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.—Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.—What convulsions it has thrown him into. Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.—What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.—Good God! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging on his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,—but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,—dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,—and the insults in his last agonies.'”*

Sterne's intense hatred of the Church of Rome, which carried him, with the rest of his party, to the verge of madness, was a phase of his early development that endured until he came to visit France and Italy and move freely among all classes in the two countries. Not till then was he aware that it was possible for Roman Catholics to be content and happy. In the meantime his feelings against Rome naturally became less violent as his mind was drawn to other things. Immediately after the Jacobite crisis, various important changes affecting his own career took place in the Church of York. In the autumn of 1747, Archbishop Herring was translated to the see of Canterbury in recognition of "his tried loyalty and known zeal in the cause of Protestantism". His place was filled by Matthew Hutton, formerly Bishop of Bangor. Richard Osbaldeston, Dean since 1728 of the York Chapter,

* *The Abuses of Conscience*, July 29, 1750.

was likewise elevated to the bishopric of Carlisle. His successor was John Fountayne, Prebendary of Salisbury and Canon of Windsor. Dr. Sterne was disappointed of immediate reward, for he had lost favour at home because of his persecution of Dr. Burton and the "Popish Nunnery"; and his Majesty's ministers thought he ought to be satisfied with the various sinecures which he already enjoyed. At one time he offered £200 for the freedom of the city of York; but the Corporation, in spite of the inducement, refused him the honour. He tried for the deanery of York and for prebends at Westminster, Windsor, and Canterbury, in all of which he missed his aim. But in lieu of these places, he was transferred, in 1750, from the archdeaconry of Cleveland to that of the richer East Riding, and five years later he was appointed to the second prebendal stall in Durham Cathedral. There are extant several amusing letters* of his to the Duke of Newcastle, in which the pluralist pleads for these and other preferments, urging in his own behalf long and faithful services to church and state. The one asking for Durham is typical. It runs as follows:

"My Lord

"I hope Your Grace finds that it is not in my nature to be troublesome in my Solicitations; and indeed I am the less so, as I had the Honour of being taken in so kind a manner under Your immediate Protection. But hearing of the Bishop of Gloucester's Death, in my Passage thro' this Town to Bath, I am willing to hope that I shall not be thought impertinent in acquainting Your Grace that a Prebend in the Church of Durham, where there are two Vacant, as it lies near my other Preferments, will be equally agreeable to me, as either Westminster, Windsor, or Canterbury; but I submit it intirely to Your Grace's Judgment and Pleasure, only begging Leave to hope that as I have spent now upwards of Thirty five years in a faithful Service of the Crown, at an Expence that I believe no Clergyman else has done, that I shall, thro' Your Grace's Friendship and Goodness, receive a Mark of the King's Favour at this time, when there are so many Stalls vacant in different Churches:

* British Museum, *Additional MSS*, 32719-30.

“There will be no one with more Gratitude, as there has been none with greater zeal thro’ life,

“My Lord,

“Your Grace’s

“Most Dutiful and

“Westminster—September
the 19th 1752—

“Devoted Servant

“Jaques Sterne”

In reply Newcastle asked Dr. Sterne for a list of his present holdings with their value, as preliminary to further grants. The list, which was duly written out and sent to the duke, contains these large items:

“A Prebend of Southwell. The reserv’d Rent of which is only £17—15s.—0, but there is a Corpse belonging to it at South-Muskham, of about £200 a year, and an House at Southwell.

“The Vicarage of Hornsea Cum Riston, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, worth £150—

“The Rectory of Rise something above £90.

“He has nothing else but the Arch-Deaconry, where he lives, worth about £60—and a Residentiaryship and Precentorship of York, which are inseparable in His Case, because if he parted with the Precentorship, he cou’d not continue Residentiary—worth betwixt three and four hundred pounds a year communibus annis.”

Dr. Sterne’s income, about £900 a year, as it appears from the memorandum, was really large for the eighteenth century, though the pluralist, with his lack of humour, could not see it that way.

His nephew undoubtedly expected promotion like the rest. If his services were less conspicuous than theirs, he was certainly regarded at that time as a young clergyman of unusual ability, for he was invited to preach at York on two extraordinary occasions. At that time the city supported two charities for maintaining and educating poor children—the Blue Coat School for boys, and the Grey Coat School for girls. On Good Friday, April 17, 1747, the young prebendary delivered in the parish church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, by the great minster, the annual sermon for the benefit of these

foundations. Besides the usual congregation of commoners, there were present the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs, in full official capacity. The preacher most aptly chose for his theme "the miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and administered unto him in a time of great scarcity and distress". Already a master of his art, Sterne rose, by one picturesque passage after another, to the pathetic climax where Elijah restores the widow's dead child to life, and, taking it in his arms, places it once more in the bosom of its mother. Finally came the direct appeal to the congregation, that the unfortunate children among them might not be sent out into a "vicious world" without friends and instruction. The appeal was heeded, for the collection amounted to more than sixty-four pounds.* A few weeks later the sermon appeared in print as a sixpenny pamphlet, bearing the title *The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Consider'd*, and dedicated to "The Very Reverend Richard Osbaldeston", who had not yet received his appointment to Carlisle.

Eloquent as Sterne was on charity, he greatly surpassed that effort in the sermon preached in the cathedral at the close of the summer assizes, on July 29, 1750. The opportunity came to him as chaplain for that year to Sir William Pennyman, the high sheriff of the county of York. In the congregation were the judges for the summer session, "the Hon. Mr. Baron Clive and the Hon. Mr. Baron Smythe", the high sheriff and the gentlemen of the grand jury, the clergy of the cathedral, and commoners to the number of a thousand. For this official function the preacher selected as text a sentence from St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: "For we trust we have a good conscience". Sterne began, as was henceforth to be his way on great occasions, by half denying the assertion of his text. In this instance was set up the claim against the Apostle that any man, if he thinks about it at all, ought to know whether he has a good conscience or not; it should be for him a matter of knowledge, not merely of trust, St. Paul to the contrary notwithstanding. After winning attention by this startling device, Sterne proceeded

* *General Advertiser*, April 25, 1747.

to draw from life admirable character-sketches of various types of men, ranging from the openly vicious to the casuist who permits conscience to be dethroned from the judgment-seat by passion, greed, self interest, or false notions of honour. On the way he stopped for a gay thrust at his banker and physician, "neither of them men of much religion", to whom he trusted his fortune or life, simply because it was for their advantage to deal honestly with him: because, he said, "they cannot hurt me without hurting themselves more". But in case it should be to the interest of the one, added the preacher, "to secrete my fortune and turn me out naked in the world", or of the other to "send me out of it and enjoy an estate by my death without dishonour to himself or his art", then no dependence could be placed upon these men who make a jest of religion and treat its sanctions with contempt. Running all through the sermon, as an adroit compliment to the judges, were images and phrases taken from the procedure of law-courts, reaching their climax at the close, where Sterne likened conscience to "a British judge in this land of liberty, who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written".

At "the unanimous request" of "many Gentlemen of Worth and Character", the sermon was sent to the local press as a sixpenny pamphlet under the title of *The Abuses of Conscience*. On the title-page were the names of the two honourable judges; and the dedication was inscribed to "Sir William Pennyman, Bart." and a long list of grand jurors. So well did Sterne himself like this clever sermon—the most closely reasoned discourse that ever came from his pen—that he afterwards slipped it into *Tristram Shandy*, where Dr. Slop, *alias* Dr. Burton, who surely was not present on its first delivery, was at length compelled to listen to it from the lips of Corporal Trim.

CHAPTER IV

QUARREL WITH HIS UNCLE

1747-1751

THESE unusual honours which Sterne was receiving were accompanied by no important advancement, owing, in the first place, to dissensions in the Church of York. During the crisis of 1745, the clergy suspended their petty differences and united against a common enemy in defence of the House of Hanover and the Church of England. But no sooner was the danger over, than they began once more to intrigue against one another, each seeking his own advantage without much regard to his associates. From the first there was friction between the new archbishop and the new dean, the one accusing the other of encroaching upon his rights and prerogatives, with the result that two more or less distinct parties were formed within the York Chapter. On the one side were Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Jaques Sterne, with their followers, men of the same age and similar political and religious opinions. Against them were Dean Fountayne and several of the more liberal canons and prebendaries, including Laurence Sterne, who was an old college friend of the dean. These antagonisms hastened what was sure to come at some time, first an estrangement and then an open and bitter quarrel between the two Sternes, uncle and nephew. In 1747, or thereabouts, occurred a hot scene between the two divines, in the course of which Sterne told his uncle that he would write no more political paragraphs for him. This scene very likely announced the end of the newspaper established at York under the auspices of the Whigs. "I * * * detested such dirty work", said Sterne long afterwards, "thinking it beneath me". And to a friend he wrote: "I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantage——'Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for

some years to an ungrateful person." The same tale was told by the wiseacres who gathered at the York coffee-houses, only they added that the quarrel was really over "a favourite mistress of the Precentor's", who loved Laurie too well.

In return Dr. Sterne denounced his nephew as "ungrateful and unworthy", and inveighed against him furiously in letters to mutual friends. The nephew, if we interpret aright a passage in *Tristram Shandy*, accused his uncle of being at the head of "a grand confederacy" against him; of playing the part, as it were, of Malice in a melodrama, who sets on "Cruelty and Cowardice, twin ruffians" to waylay a traveller in the dark. "The whole plan of the attack", says the passage, "was put in execution all at once,—with so little mercy on the side of the allies,—and so little suspicion in *Yorick*, of what was carrying on against him,—that when he thought, good easy man! full preferment was o'ripening,—they had smote his root, and then he fell, as many a worthy man had fallen before him." *Yorick's* head was so bruised and misshapen by these unhandsome blows that he declared, quoting Sancho Panza, that should he recover and "Mitres thereupon be suffered to rain down from heaven as thick as hail, not one of them would fit it".

Though the quarrel had been long brewing, the first serious blow, however, was struck, not at Sterne's head, but, highwayman like, at his purse. As Prebendary of North Newbald, Laurence Sterne preached in the cathedral twice every year, on the sixth Sunday in Lent, and on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, when the harvesting of his crops was over.* Prebendaries and other officials who from sickness, distance, or disinclination found it impossible or inconvenient to take their turns at preaching, were accustomed to engage a brother living near by. Their agent in the negotiations was sometimes John Hildyard, a York bookseller, who knew everybody and whose shop in Stonegate was a gathering place for the minor clergy. Sterne liked to

* A table of preachers containing Sterne's dates is given by Thomas Ellway in *Anthems * * * as they are now Perform'd in the Cathedral * * * of York * * * Durham * * * Lincoln* (York, 1753).

supply the places of others for the addition which it brought to his income. Writing to his archdeacon in 1750, he said: "My daughter will be Twenty Pounds a better Fortune by the favours I've received of this kind * * * this Year; and as so much at least is annually and without much trouble to be picked up in our Pulpit, by any man who cares to make the Sermons, you who are a Father will easily excuse my motive."

It was no hard labour. The sermons were usually perfunctory, and Sterne could drive into York on a Sunday morning, breakfast with a friend, preach in the cathedral, and be back at Sutton or Stillington for the evening service. It meant a little physical exertion; nothing more. Dean Fountayne and various prebendaries, who were friends to Sterne, gave him their less important turns, and even his uncle down to 1750 permitted him to take his place on the twenty-ninth of May, a day of thanksgiving for the restoration of Charles the Second. All went on well until late in the autumn of 1750, when Dr. Sterne suddenly awoke to the fact that his nephew was earning too much in this business. On All Saints of that year Sterne came in and preached for the dean. It was a hollow and conventional sermon worked over from Tillotson on the text, "For our conversation is in heaven", and keyed to the tune: "Here we consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers.—Our home is in another country, where we are continually tending; there our hearts and affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage shall be over, there shall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual rest is designed and prepared for us for ever." Just after the sermon Sterne strolled into Hildyard's shop to enquire about preaching a week or two later for Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland in succession to Dr. Sterne. Whereupon he discovered that his uncle was intervening against this source of his supply. There ensued a lively dialogue, which was broken off on the word *impudence* by the entrance of Dr. William Herring, the Chancellor of the diocese. Sterne related the whole story of the angry encounter in a letter to his archdeacon, dated at Sutton, November 3, 1750:.

"I step'd," says Sterne, "into his [Hildyard's] shop

just after Sermon on *All Saints*, when with an Air of much Gravity and Importance, he beckon'd me to follow him into an inner Room. No sooner had he shut the Dore, but with the awful Solemnity of a Premier who held a Lettre de Cachêt upon whose Contents my Life or Liberty depended——after a Minut's Pause——he thus opens his Commission: 'Sir——My Friend the A. Deacon of Cleveland, not caring to preach his Turn, as I conjectured, has left me to provide a Preacher,——but before I can take any Steps in it with Regard to you—I want first to know, Sir, upon what Footing you and Dr. Sterne are?'——'Upon what Footing!'——'Yes Sir, How your Quarel stands?'——'What's that to you—How our Quarel stands! What's that to you, you Puppy?' 'But Sir, Mr. Blackburn would know'——'What's that to him?'——'But Sir, don't be angry, I only want to know of you, whether Dr. Sterne will not be displeased in Case you should preach'——'Go Look; I've just now been preaching and you could not have fitter Opportunity to be satisfied.'——'I hope, Mr. Sterne, you are not Angry.' 'Yes I am; But much more astonished at your *Impudence*.' I know not whether the Chancellor's stepping in at this Instant and flapping to the Dore, did not save his tender Soul the Pain of the last Word. However that be, he retreats upon this unexpected Rebuff, takes the Chancellor aside, asks his Advice, comes back Submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr. Hering had quite satisfied him as to the Grounds of his Scruple (tho' not of his Folly) and therefore beseeches me to let the Matter pass, and to preach the Turn. When I——as Percy complains in Harry 4

——All smarting with my Wounds
 To be thus pesterd by a Popinjay
 Out of my Grief and my Impatience
 Answerd neglectingly, I know not what
 ——for he made me Mad
 To see him shine so bright and smell so sweet
 And talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman
 ——Bid him be Gone——and seek Another fitter for his *Turn*.

“But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my Case, so I was forced to tell him in plain Prose tho’ somewhat elevated——That I would not preach, and that he might get a Parson wh[erever he] could find one.”

At this point, Hildyard produced his letter from the archdeacon with reference to the supply. After reading it and finding that it contained only “a cautious hint” against offending the precentor, Sterne cooled his angry humour and decided to take the turn. Three days later, as he was on his way to the postoffice with the letter from which we have quoted, Sterne met the bookseller, who pressed him not to let the matter transpire. Though Sterne “half promised” to hold back the letter, he finally sent it, after opening it and adding a strange postscript to the effect that it should do Mr. Hildyard no harm. The next week Sterne again wrote to the archdeacon, this time humbly apologising for his heat. “It was my anger”, he said finely, “and not me, so I beg this may go to sleep in peace with the rest.” But it was too late for peace, though the archdeacon himself greatly wished it; for Dr. Sterne was soon informed of what had occurred in the bookseller’s shop. On the sixth of the following December he signed the reprobation of his nephew in a letter to Archdeacon Blackburne, beginning:

“Good Mr. Archdeacon,

“I will beg Leave to rely upon your Pardon for taking the Liberty I do with you in relation to your Turns of preaching in the Minster. What occasions it, is Mr. Hildyard’s employing the last time the only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy Nephew of my own, the Vicar of Sutton; and I should be much obligd to you, if you woud please either to appoint any person yourself, or leave it to your Register to appoint one when you are not here. If any of my turns woud suit you better than your own, I woud change with you.”

Despite this brand upon him, it seemed for the moment as if the Vicar of Sutton might win in the struggle with his uncle. Joined with Dr. Sterne *against him* were Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Francis Topham, the legal adviser to many

of the clergy. *For him* were Dean Fountayne, Archdeacon Blackburne, Chancellor Herring, and most of the active men in the York chapter, including the two resident canons—Charles Cowper and William Berdmore, a man, said Sterne, “of a gentle and pacific temper”,—and Jacob Custobadie, registrar and chamberlain to the dean and chapter. Besides all these sympathisers, a close friendship was forming between Sterne and Thomas, fourth Viscount Fauconberg of Newburgh Priory, in whose extensive manor lay Sutton-on-the-Forest and other townships in the York valley. The viscount (created earl in 1756) was then a lord of his Majesty’s bedchamber and member of the Privy Council. His rank and his age—he was above fifty years old—perhaps precluded the easy intercourse that the Vicar of Sutton enjoyed with his fellow canons and prebendaries. He was rather a patron to whom Sterne looked for another and a better living. But under the circumstances, any signal preferment was impossible, for it would require the sanction of the Archbishop of York, with whom the Vicar of Sutton was out of favour. When, for example, the perpetual curacy of Coxwold, within the nomination of Lord Fauconberg, became vacant in 1753, Sterne had to be passed by for his former curate, Richard Wilkinson.

There were, however, within the sole gift of his friends several small offices that might be bestowed upon him as a mark of favour and confidence. Without hesitancy, Lord Fauconberg led the way by appointing him Commissary of the Peculiar and Spiritual Jurisdiction of Alne and Tollerton, which included also Skelton and Wigginton—parishes in the North Riding over which the Fauconbergs had exercised, under the Dean of York, important rights since the dissolution of the monasteries. On December 29, 1750, three weeks after he had been denounced by his uncle, Sterne appeared at the deanery, where he took the usual oaths and designated his surrogates who were to act in his stead in case of absence.* Six months later fell vacant the similar Commissaryship of

* The record of the appointment in the Diocesan Registry of York is accompanied by memoranda of the annual visitations made by Sterne and his surrogates, beginning in 1751 and ending in 1767.

the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, which formed a part of the dean's immediate jurisdiction, independent of the archbishop or the York chapter. For this office were pitted against each other Laurence Sterne and Dr. Topham, his uncle's candidate. After a noisy clash of arms, during which the lie was freely passed, Sterne received the appointment, but only by engendering hatreds so acrimonious that they could never be allayed. These two offices that Sterne thus obtained were as much civil as ecclesiastical. It was in both cases the incumbent's duty to make annual visitations of the clergy within his jurisdiction for proving wills and granting letters of administration, for swearing in church wardens and receiving their presentments of ecclesiastical offences, and for looking after the morals of the district generally. The fees from the two commissaryships both together amounted to but little. From the first Sterne received in no year more than two pounds and some odd shillings, and the second was estimated at only five or six guineas. But they were much coveted by cathedral officials, for they gave the incumbent an honourable position among the clergy of the diocese as a direct representative of the Dean of York and the lord of the manor.

It is not said how Dr. Sterne regarded these honours to his ungrateful nephew or his appointment the year before as chaplain to Sir William Pennymen, whereby he was enabled to preach an extraordinary sermon before an extraordinary congregation in the great cathedral. But that they set his wrath in a flame may be inferred from the brutal course which he was now taking to crush him forever. "When to justify a private appetite", says the author of *Tristram Shandy*, conveying a passage from Archbishop Tenison on Lord Bacon, "it is once resolved upon, that an innocent and helpless creature shall be sacrificed, 'tis an easy matter to pick up sticks enough from any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with". So it was in this case. Sterne's ill treatment of his mother and sister Catherine—still a persisting legend—had long been given out by Dr. Sterne as the first cause of estrangement. After the death of Roger Sterne, his widow and daughter, as has been

said in a previous chapter, settled on a government pension at Clonmel in Ireland. Sometime in 1742 they came over to England on hearing that Laurie had married an heiress. For a time they were persuaded to live in Chester, but by 1747 or thereabouts, they moved to York, near what they supposed was inexhaustible wealth. Thenceforth these unfortunate women were tossed to and fro in the quarrel, not as any real cause of it but as available weapons. At various times the nephew tried to patch up a friendship with his uncle, but all attempts were vain. As early as 1747, he wrote to Dr. Sterne, requesting him to arrange a conference with his wife instead of himself, that there might be no explosion of temper. And late in 1750, Dean Fountayne sought to bring together mother, son, and uncle for a complete understanding. This friendly mediation also failed. Three months later Dr. Sterne struck his final blow. He placed Mrs. Sterne and her daughter Catherine in some charitable institution at York, perhaps the workhouse or "the common gaol", and then spread the report that they were there by neglect of the Vicar of Sutton. Stunned by the blow, Laurence Sterne at once sat down and wrote the following long letter, dated Sutton, April 5, 1751, to his uncle in defence of his conduct:

"Sir,—'Tis now three years since I troubled you with a letter in vindication of myself in regard of my Mother, in which that I might give you all imaginable conviction, how barbarously she had dealt by me, and at the same time how grossly she had deceived you by the misrepresentation which I found she had made of my behaviour towards her—I desired my wife might have leave to wait upon you to lay the state of our circumstances fairly before you, and with that the account of what we had done for my Mother, that from a view of both together you might be *convinced* how much my Mother has complained *without reason*.

"My motive for offering to send my wife rather than myself upon this particular business, being first merely to avoid the occasion of any heat which might arise betwixt you and me upon any thing foreign to the Errand, which might possibly disappoint the end of it—and secondly as I had rea-

son to think your passions were pre-engaged in this affair and that the respect you owed my wife as a gentlewoman would be a check against their breaking out; and consequently that you would be more likely to give her a candid hearing, which was all I wished, and indeed all that a plain story to be told without Art or Management could possibly stand in want of. As you had thought proper to concern yourself in my Mother's complaints against me, I took it for granted you *could* not deny me so plain a piece of Justice, so that when you wrote me word back by my servant 'You desired to be excused from any conference with my wife, but that I might appear before you'—As I foresaw such an Interview with the sense I had of such a treatment was likely to produce nothing but an angry expostulation (which could do no good, but might do hurt), I begged *in my turn* to be excused; and as you had already refused so unexceptionable an offer of hearing my defence, I supposed in course you would be silent for ever after upon that Head; and therefore I concluded with saying, 'as I was under no necessity of applying to you and wanted no man's direction or advice in my own private concerns, I would make myself as easy as I could, with the consciousness of having done my Duty and of being able to prove I had whenever I thought fit, and for the future that I was determined never to give you any further trouble upon the subject'.

"In this resolution I have kept for three years and should have continued to the end of my life—but being told of late by some of my friends that this clamour has been kept up against me, and by as singular a Stroke of Ill design as could be levelled against a defenceless man, who lives retired in the country and has few opportunities of disabusing the world; that my Mother has moreover been fixed in that very place where a hard report might do me (as a Clergyman) the most real disservice*——I was roused by the advice of my friends to think of some way of defending myself, which I own I should have set about immediately by telling my story publicly to the world but for the following inconvenience, that I could not do myself justice this way without doing

* "The common gaol."

myself an injury at the same time by laying open the nakedness of my circumstances, which for aught I knew was likely to make me suffer more in the opinion of one half of the world than I could possibly gain from the other part of it by the clearest defence that could be made.

“Under the distress of this vexatious alternative I went directly to my old friend and college acquaintance, our worthy Dean, and laid open the hardship of my situation, begging his advice what I should best do to extricate myself. His opinion was that there was nothing better than to have a Meeting, face to face with you, and my Mother; and with his usual friendship and humanity he undertook to use his best offices to procure it for me.

“Accordingly about three months ago he took an opportunity of making you this request, which he told me you desired only to defer till the hurry of your Nunnery cause was over.

“Since the determination of that affair he has put you in mind of what you gave me hopes of, but without success; you having (as he tells me) absolutely refused now to hear one word of what I have to say. The denying me this piece of common right is the hardest measure that a man in my situation could receive, and though the whole inconvenience of it may be thought to fall, as intended, directly upon me, yet I wish, Dr. Sterne, a great part of it may not rebound upon yourself. For why, may any one ask, why will you interest yourself in a complaint against your Nephew if you are determined against hearing what he has to say for himself?—and if you thus deny him every opportunity he seeks of doing himself justice? Is it not too plain you do not wish to find him justified, or that you do not care to lose the uses of such a handle against him? However it may seem to others, the case appearing in this light to me, it has determined me, contrary to my former promise ‘of giving you no further trouble’—to add this, which is not to solicit again what you have denied me to the Dean, (for after what I have felt from so hard a Treatment, I would not accept of it, should the Offer come now from myself.)—But my intent is by a plain and honest narrative of my Behaviour, and my

Mother's too, to disarm you for the future; being determined since you would not hear me face to face with my accusers, that you shall not go unconvinced or at least not uninformed of the true state of the Case.

* * * * *

“From my Father's death to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my Mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish her with money, I seldom heard from her; and when I did, the account I generally had was, that by the help of an Embroidery school that she kept, and by the punctual payment of her pension, which is £20 a year, she lived well, and would have done so to this hour had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England.

* * * * *

“The very hour I received notice of her landing at Liverpool I took post to prevent her coming nearer me, stayed three days with her, used all the arguments I could fairly to engage her to return to Ireland, and end her days with her own relations.

“I convinced her that besides the interest of my wife's fortune, I had then but a bare hundred pounds a year; out of which my ill health obliged me to keep a curate, that we had moreover ourselves to keep, and in that sort of decency which left it not in our power to give her much; that what we could spare she should as certainly receive in Ireland as here; that the place she had left was a cheap country—her native one, and where she was sensible £20 a year was more than equal to thirty here, besides the discount of having her pension paid in England where it was not due and the utter impossibility I was under of making up so many deficiencies.

“I concluded with representing to her the inhumanity of a Mother *able* to maintain herself, thus forcing herself as a burden upon a Son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me.

“In short I summed up all those arguments with making her a present of twenty guineas, which with a present of Cloathes etc. which I had given her the day before, I doubted

not would have the effect I wanted. But I was much mistaken, for though she heard me with attention, yet as soon as she had got the money into her pocket, she told me with an air of the utmost insolence 'That as for going back to live in Ireland, she was determined to show me no such sport, that she had found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at her ease either at York or Chester.'

"I need not swell this letter with all I said upon the unreasonableness of such a determination; it is sufficient to inform you that, all I did say proving to no purpose, I was forced to leave her in her resolution; and notwithstanding so much provocation, I took my leave with assuring her 'That though my Income was strait I should not forget I was a son, though she had forgot she was a *mother*.'

"From Liverpool, as she had determined, she went with my sister to fix at Chester, where, though she had little just grounds for such an expectation, she found me better than my word, for we were kind to her above our power, and common justice to ourselves; and though it went hard enough down with us to reflect we were supporting both her and my sister in the pleasures and advantages of a township which for prudent reasons we denied ourselves, yet still we were weak enough to do it for five years together, though I own not without continual remonstrances on my side as well as perpetual clamours on theirs, which you will naturally imagine to have been the case when all that was given was thought as much above reason by the one, as it fell *below* the Expectations of the other.

"In this situation of things betwixt us, in the year '44 my sister was sent from Chester by order of my mother to York, that she might make her complaints to you, and engage you to second them in these unreasonable claims upon us.

"This was the intent of her coming, though the pretence of her journey (of which I bore the expences) was to *make* a month's visit to me, or rather a month's experiment of my further weakness.—She stayed her time or longer—was received by us with all kindness, was sent back at my own charge with my own servant and horses, with five guineas

which I gave her in her pocket, and a six and thirty piece which my wife put into her hand as she took horse.

“In what light she represented so much affection and generosity I refer to your memory of the account she gave you of it in her return through York. But for very strong reasons I believe she concealed from you all that was necessary to make a proper handle of us both; which double Game by the bye, my Mother has played over again upon us, for the same purposes since she came to York, of which you will see a proof by and bye.

“But to return to my sister. As we were not able to give her a fortune, and were as little able to maintain her as she expected—therefore, as the truest mark of our friendship in such a situation, my wife and self took no small pains, the time she was with us to turn her thoughts to some way of depending upon her own industry, in which we offered her all imaginable assistance; first by proposing to her that, if she would set herself to learn the business of a Mantuamaker, as soon as she could get insight enough into it to make a Gown and set up for herself, ‘*That* we would give her £30 to begin the world and support her till business fell in; or, if she would go into a Milliner’s shop in London, my wife engaged not only to get her into a shop where she should have £10 a year wages, but to equip her with cloathes etc. properly for the place; or lastly, if she liked it better, as my Wife had then an opportunity of recommending her to the family of one of the first of our Nobility—she undertook to get her a creditable place in it, where she would receive no less than eight or ten pounds a year wages with other advantages.’ My sister showed no seeming opposition to either of the two last proposals till my wife had wrote and got a favourable answer to the one, and an immediate offer of the other. It will astonish you, Sir, when I tell you she rejected them with the utmost scorn, telling me I might send my own children to service when I had any, but for her part, as she was the daughter of a gentleman, *she would not disgrace* herself but would live as such. Notwithstanding so absurd an instance of her folly, which might have disengaged me from any further concern, yet I persisted in doing what I thought was

right; and though after this the tokens of our kindness were neither so great nor so frequent as before, yet nevertheless we continued sending what we could conveniently spare.

“It is not usual to take receipts for presents made; so that I have not many vouchers of that kind; and [as] my Mother has more than once denied the money I have sent her, even to my own face, I have little expectation of such acknowledgements as she ought to make. But this I solemnly declare upon the nearest computation we can make, that in money, cloathes, and other presents we are more than £90 poorer for what we have given and remitted to them. In one of the remittances (which was the summer [of] my sisters visit) and which as I remember was a small bill drawn for £3 by Mr. Ricord upon Mr. Boldero,* after my Mother had got the money in Chester for the bill, she peremptorily denied the receipt of it. I naturally supposed some mistake of Mr. Ricord in directing—However that she might not be a sufferer by the disappointment, I immediately sent another bill for as much more; but withal said, as Mr. Ricord could prove his sending her the Bill, I was determined to trace out *who* had got my money; upon which she wrote word back that she had received it herself but had *forgot it*. You will the more readily believe this when I inform you, that in December, '47, when my Mother went to your house to complain she could not get a *farthing* from me, that she carried with her *ten guineas* in her pocket, which I had given her but two days before. If she could *forget* such a sum, I had reason to *remember* it, for when I gave it I did not leave myself one guinea in the house to befriend my wife, though then within one day of her labour, and under an apparent necessity of a man-midwife to attend her.

“What *uses* she made of this ungenerous concealment I refer again to yourself—But I suppose they were the same as in my sister's case, to make a penny of us both.

“When I gave her this sum, I desired she would go and acquaint you with it, and moreover took that occasion to tell her I would give her £8 every year whilst I lived. The week after she wrote me word she had been with you, and was

* Arthur Ricord, Sr., and John Boldero, gentlemen of York.

determined not to accept that offer unless I would settle the £8 upon her out of my Wife's fortune, and chargeable upon it in case my wife should be left a widow. This she added was *your* particular advice, which without better evidence I am not yet willing to believe; because, though you do not yet know the particulars of my Wife's fortune—you must know so much of it, was such an event as my death to happen shortly, without such a burden as this upon my widow and my child, *that Mrs. Sterne would be as much distressed, and as undeservedly so as any widow in Great Britain:* and though I know as well as you and my Mother that I have a *power in law* to lay her open to all the terrors of such a melancholy situation—that I feel I have *no power* in equity or in conscience to do so; and I will add in her behalf, considering how much she has merited at my hands as the best of wives, that was I capable of being worried into so cruel a measure as to give away hers, and her child's bread upon the clamour which you and my Mother have raised—that I should not only be the weakest but the *worst man* that ever woman trusted with all she had.

* * * * *

“Was I, Sir, to die this night, I have not more than the very Income of £20 a year (which my mother enjoys) to divide equally betwixt my Wife, a helpless child, and perhaps a third unhappy sharer, that might come into the world some months after its father's death to claim its part. The false modesty of not being able to declare this, has made me thus long a prey to my Mother, and to this clamour raised against me; and since I have made known thus much of my condition as an honest man, it becomes me to add, *that I think I have no right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child: and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my Mother's pension of £20 a year when I have as much to leave my Wife, who besides the duties I owe her of a Husband and the father of a dear child, has this further claim:—that she whose bread I am thus defending was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without

it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised us so much sorrow upon that score brought not one sixpence into the family—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that she was the daughter of no other than a poor Suttler who followed the camp in Flanders, was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a fourth part of that the government allows her; and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision, though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife.

“I suppose this representation will be a sufficient answer to any one who expects no more from a man than what the difficulties under which he acts will enable him to perform. For those who expect more, I leave them to their expectations, and conclude this long and hasty wrote letter, with declaring that the relation in which I stand to you inclines me to exclude you from the number of the last. For notwithstanding the hardest measure that ever man received, continued on your side without any provocation on mine, without ever once being told my fault, or conscious of even committing one which deserved an unkind look from you—notwithstanding this, and the bitterness of ten years’ unwearied persecution, that I retain that sense of the service you did me at my first setting out in the world, which becomes a man inclined to be grateful, and that I am

“Sir,

“your once much obliged though now

“your much injured nephew,

“Laurence Sterne”

This “plain and honest narrative”, exactly contemporary with the incidents described in it, gives the lie direct to the epigram of Horace Walpole’s, so neatly expressed by Lord Byron, who said, with reference to a scene in the *Sentimental Journey*, that Sterne “preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother”. It likewise explains the tradition, coming from John Croft, that Sterne left his mother to die in “the common gaol at York in a wretched condition, or soon after she was released”.* If she was confined there as a

* The story was told in its most complete form in a letter to George Whatley, treasurer of the London Foundling Hospital, from the

vagrant, it was by order of Dr. Sterne that he might do his nephew, "as a clergyman, the most real disservice" in his power. The letter is throughout a vindication of Sterne's conduct, so far as there can be any vindication of a son's break with his mother. Whatever else may be said of Sterne he was no niggard. He gave his mother and sister freely of his income and would have made it an allowance. It was neither just nor reasonable to ask him to settle upon them an annuity chargeable upon his wife's small estate. No one can have any patience with his sister Catherine who refused the chance to earn an honest living. His mother was no doubt vulgar, turbulent, and untrustworthy, for Dr. Sterne himself, when he had no motive to the contrary, spoke of her temper as "clamourous and rapacious". And yet, to say the truth, Sterne's vindication of himself, taken in the whole, does not leave the best impression of his own character. It is difficult to think of a son's casting a slur upon the birth of his mother, however humble it may have been. For once Sterne's sense of humour, to say the least, deserted him. A man of finer grain would have taken in his mother and sister and made the best of it. Mrs. Sterne and her daughter, once fixed in York under the surveillance of Dr. Sterne, certainly gave sufficient occasion for rumours, not wholly without justification, of their neglect by the young Vicar of Sutton. Dr. Sterne was thereby able to make the most of the strained relations between mother and son, yet to continue a short period, for stirring up further enmities and spreading the report of them where they would do the most harm.

Rev. Daniel Watson, Vicar of Leake, near Coxwold, in Sterne's time. Under date of January 10, 1776, Watson wrote:

"Shall I tell you what York scandal says? *viz.*: that Sterne, when possessed of preferment of £300 a year, would not pay £10 to release his mother out of Ousebridge prison, when poverty was her only fault, and her character so good that two of her neighbours clubbed to set her at liberty, to gain a livelihood, as she had been accustomed to do, by taking in washing. Yet this was the man whose fine feelings gave the world the story of *Le Fevre* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Do you not feel as if something hurt you more than a cut across your finger at reading this? Talking on benevolence, or writing about it, in the most pathetic manner, and doing all the good you can without shew and parade, are very different things."

This letter, then in possession of John Towill Rutt, was published in *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for January, 1806.

CHAPTER V

PASTIMES AND FRIENDSHIPS

STERNE had not won in the long warfare with his uncle. Such at least is the intimation that he wished to convey in the sketch of Parson Yorick. "Yorick", he says, "fought it out with all imaginable gallantry for some time; till, overpowered by numbers, and worn out at length by the calamities of the war,—but more so, by the ungenerous manner in which it was carried on,—he threw down the sword; and though he kept up his spirits in appearance to the last, he died, nevertheless, as was generally thought, quite brokenhearted." Though Sterne did not literally die of a broken heart, he was bruised and humbled to the dust. His friends, it is true, had stood by him nobly through it all, but they were powerless to help him in the way he most needed their help. Known as he was among them as a gentleman of means, he could not in his pride go to them and "lay open the nakedness" of his condition; to no one except perhaps the dean, could he go and say that his wife's fortune was in danger of being consumed, and that he was scarce able to maintain himself on the livings he held. The damp and depressing climate of the York valley was working ruin to his delicate constitution, and he longed for a parish among the hills; but that was denied him. Like Yorick he was compelled to throw down his sword and retire to Sutton to bide his time. During the next few years we are to imagine him as still in touch with his friends at York and their intrigues, but as entering more completely into the occupations and pastimes of a country parson. "If you have three or four last Yorks Courants", runs a letter written in the midst of parish business, to a friend in the city, "pray send one to us, for we are as much strangers to all that has pass'd amongst you, as if we were in a mine in Siberia." Every summer he drove through the beautiful



Thomas Bridges and Laurence Sterne

Yorkshire country to Alne and Pickering and other villages within the jurisdiction of his commissaryships, for he performed, as the records show, his visitations with scrupulous regularity. He made friends everywhere. This is the period of his friendships, amusements, and farming. He was shuffling his cards anew for a last deal.

When Sterne, at the nadir of his fortunes, returned once more to his farming, he felt again the gnawing of the old land-hunger. He had, to be sure, no more capital to invest in land; and not even enough to carry through the projects that he was forming; for he conveyed, by lease and release dated the fifth and the sixth of April, 1753, his freehold to his friends Stephen Croft and Dr. Fountayne.* This conveyance, considering his straitened circumstances, can mean only a second mortgage on the Tindall farm. But there are sometimes, as Sterne well knew, ways of obtaining land without purchase. In the eighteenth century, the favourite way was an enclosure or deforesting Act. What Sterne, unbiased by self-interest, thought of these enclosures, which deprived poor parishioners of fuel and pasturage, he has left on record in *Tristram Shandy*. Mr. Walter Shandy, it is there related, rode out with his son on a morning "to save if possible a beautiful wood, which the dean and chapter were hewing down to give to the poor"; that is, says Sterne's footnote, "to the *poor in spirit*, inasmuch as they divided the money amongst themselves". But in his own case, none the less for this opinion, Sterne could waive all scruples against harming the poor of his parish. At that time Sutton formed a part of the demesne of Lord Fauconberg of Newburgh Priory. Besides being lord of the manor, the earl was also "seized of several cottages, frontsteads, lands, and tenements" within the township. The second large landowner was the squire, Philip Harland, who, in addition to his "divers freehold messuages", had inherited from his father a lease of the rectory, including the greater tithes. Third in the list came Sterne as vicar of the parish and as owner of a "freehold messuage" in his own right. The three men, working together, easily obtained, through the influence of Lord

* The conveyance was registered at Northallerton on May 2, 1753.

Fauconberg, an Act of Parliament for enclosing most of those lands of Sutton which had long lain common.

The lands in question consisted, say the Articles of Agreement* bearing date January 15, 1756, of "six common Fields", containing "Thirteen Hundred Acres of Land, or upwards, and called or known by the Names of the North-field, Enhams, Murton-field, Thorp-field, South-field and West-field, * * * also certain common Meadow Grounds * * * called White-Car-Ings, Esk, and Sharoms, and also certain large and extensive Commons, called Brown Moor, Stockhill Sykes, Three Nook piece, Hinderlands, the Woods'', and other pieces, the names of which were not well known. There were three thousand acres altogether. Commissioners, duly authorised by the Act, were appointed to make the allotments within three years after its passage. By the terms of the final instrument, which was enrolled in the registry office at Northallerton on March 23, 1759, Sterne received in his own right, exclusive of what was due to him as vicar of the parish, six parcels of land, comprising full sixty acres, with the buildings thereon. Sterne came out of the transaction as well as if he had been one of the commissioners himself. All of his allotments, as finally arranged, were close together in the North-field on the north side of the road through the village, not far from the rectory and, it would seem, near the Tindall farm, of which he had long been the owner. For Sterne's benefit Philip Harland exchanged with him three closes in the North-field for a more distant allotment; and Lord Fauconberg most generously resigned all right and title to two tenements separated from the parsonage only by the church and churchyard. By the favours of his friends, Sterne was thus lifted into a small country squire who cultivated his lands and had cottages for his labourers. In the meantime he was growing, in rivalry to the squire, huge crops of wheat, barley, oats and potatoes, bringing under the plough new fields that had been used hitherto for pasturage.

As a relief to farming and the cure of souls, Sterne enjoyed many hours and days of careless relaxation. Com-

* The Articles of Agreement are recited in the preamble to the Sutton Enclosure Act.—*Private Acts of Parliament*, 29 George II, c. 10.

mon interest had brought together the parson and the squire on a better footing than formerly, though they may never have quite understood each other. It was but a few steps for either across the road for a chat over their crops and cattle. Between Sterne and the Crofts, nothing ever occurred to ruffle their friendship. The parson and his wife were ever familiar guests at Stillington Hall on an evening for supper and for jests and story-telling by the fireside. At this period, too, the Sternes were beginning to drive over to Newburgh Priory for dinners, choice wines, and Lady Catherine's parties at quadrille, a fashionable game of cards which had displaced the royal ombre of Pope's day. Earlier we caught just a glimpse of Sterne skating over the marshes of Stillington Common, and shooting partridges on a Sunday afternoon, while his congregation was already seated in church waiting for his appearance after the slaughter should be over. To these old-time amusements he now added painting.

That Sterne was a painter before he wrote *Tristram Shandy*, must have been surmised by every reader of the book; for he therein employs so easily the technical terms of the art for running up parallels on the mechanics of literary expression, or for describing the poise and movement of his characters—whether it be Corporal Trim standing in the kitchen, hat in hand, as he announces to Susannah and the scullions that “Bobby is dead and buried”, or it be Mrs. Shandy listening at a keyhole to the conversation of her husband and my uncle Toby, in the attitude of “the Listening Slave with the Goddess of Silence at his back”. On his famous mock dedication to any duke, marquis, or earl in his Majesty's dominions who may have fifty pounds to pay for it, Sterne remarks: “The design, your Lordship sees, is good,——the colouring transparent,——the drawing not amiss;——or to speak more like a man of science,——and measure my piece in the painter's scale, divided into 20,——I believe, my Lord, the outlines will turn out as 12,——the composition as 9,——the colouring as 6,——the expression 13 and a half,——and the design—if I may be allowed, my Lord, to understand my own *design*, and supposing absolute perfection in designing, to be as 20,——I think it cannot well fall short of 19. Besides all

this,—there is keeping in it, and the dark strokes in the HOBBY-HORSE, (which is a secondary figure, and a kind of back-ground to the whole) give great force to the principal lights in your own figure, and make it come off wonderfully; ———and besides, there is an air of originality in the *tout ensemble*.” Some pages onward Sterne tells us that “good jolly noses” in “well proportioned faces, should comprehend a full third—that is, measured downwards from the setting on of the hair”. He has a hit by the way at “the honourable devices which the Pentagraphic Brethren of the brush have shewn in taking copies”. Their mechanical methods, he avers, have been stolen by “the great historians”, who insist upon drawing full-length portraits “against the light”: a method, it may be added, that “is illiberal,—dishonest,—and hard upon the character of the man who sits”. He was out of patience with the cant about “the colouring of *Titian*, the expression of *Rubens*, the grace of *Raphael*, * * * the *corregiescity* of *Corregio*, * * * or the grand contour of *Angelo*”. Sterne nevertheless appreciated from afar the early masters and made a fine paragraph upon them in reference to the dash and the sudden silence of the author that comes with it at the moment the reader would have him go on:

“Just Heaven! how does the *Poco piu* and the *Poco meno* of the *Italian* artists;—the insensible MORE OR LESS, determine the precise line of beauty in the sentence, as well as in the statue! How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick, *et caetera*,—give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure!—O my countrymen!—be nice;—be cautious of your language;—and never, O! never let it be forgotten upon what small particles your eloquence and your fame depend.”

The amateur's first ideal was Hogarth, who could convey to the mind as much by three lines as others by three hundred. *The Analysis of Beauty*, out in 1753, Sterne recommended to his readers and, more to the point, carried over into *Tristram Shandy* its opinions and phrasing for praise and banter. He was particularly struck by Hogarth's pyramid and dark serpentine line on one of its faces, an ornament to the title-page, and by what was said of them

thereafter as the beginning and end of all harmony, grace, and beauty. Beyond doubt Sterne had in mind Hogarth's distinction between the statue with its stiff lines and the living man who may conform to the line of beauty, when he placed Corporal Trim, with sermon in hand, before Dr. Slop and the Shandys:

"He stood,—for I repeat it, to take the picture of him in at one view, with his body swayed, and somewhat bent forwards,—his right leg from under him, sustaining seven-eighths of his whole weight,—the foot of his left leg, the defect of which was no disadvantage to his attitude, advanced a little,—not laterally, nor forwards, but in a line betwixt them;—his knee bent, but that not violently,—but so as to fall within the limits of the line of beauty;—and I add, of the line of science too;—for consider, it had one eighth part of his body to bear up;—so that in this case the position of the leg is determined,—because the foot could be no farther advanced, or the knee more bent, than what would allow him, mechanically to receive an eighth part of his whole weight under it, —and to carry it too.

"This I recommend to painters:—need I add,—to orators?—I think not; for unless they practise it,—— they must fall upon their noses."

Sterne's humour for painting, when he became tired of shooting partridges, greatly puzzled his parishioners. From their point of view, wrote John Croft thirty years after: "They generally considered him as crazy or crackbrained. At one time he wou'd take up the Gun and follow shooting till he became a good shott, then he wou'd take up the Pencil and paint Pictures. He chiefly copied Portraits. He had a good Idea of Drawing, but not the least of mixing his colours. There are severall Pictures of his painting at York, such as they are." Among these portraits, most of which have disappeared, was a caricature of Mrs. Sterne, signed "Pigrich f[ecit]"; "in character of execution very like", said one who saw it, "to Hogarth's Politician".* Nathaniel Hawthorne, who came across the sketch in the upper rooms of a bookseller at Old Boston, thought it the oddest thing in a "treasury

* *Notes and Queries*, third series, VII, 53.

of antiquities and curiosities''. "There was'', he said in bringing his catalogue to a close "a crayon-portrait of Sterne's wife, looking so haughty and unamiable, that the wonder is, not that he ultimately left her, but how he ever contrived to live a week with such an awful woman.''* This Hogarthian caricature was afterwards engraved for Paul Stapfer's *Laurence Sterne*, but on second thought it was suppressed.

By driving into York Sterne might pass an afternoon any day with a congenial fellow-craftsman, a certain Thomas Bridges, who was a dry wit like himself. Each painted the other on the same canvas—Sterne as clown and Bridges as quack-doctor, standing upon a platform and humbugging a crowd at a fair. Bridges holds in his outstretched right hand a phial of his tincture, between thumb and forefinger, while gravely lauding its virtues as a panacea. Sterne, a youthful face in skull cap and ruff, hat in hand, seems ready to break into a jest at the expense of his serious companion. A medicine chest lies open between them; and in the background is a pretty street scene at York, terminating in the spire of one of the churches. When last heard of, this double caricature was owned by Dr. James Atkinson (1759-1839), a York surgeon and bibliographer. He received it from his father, who was a friend of Sterne. Dr. Atkinson showed the portrait to Thomas Frognall Dibdin when at York in 1820, and permitted him to have it engraved for his *Bibliographical Tour*, whence it has come down to us in a good plate. Dibdin described the original as "a coarse production in oil" and yet "a most singular original picture".*

For a year or more Sterne had the rare good fortune of associating with Christopher Steele and his apprentice George Romney, who set up their joint studio at York in the autumn of 1756. Steele made a portrait of Sterne, and Romney afterwards "painted several scenes from *Tristram Shandy*", among which one had as subject Dr. Slop's arrival at Shandy Hall, bespattered with mud—a caricature, it is thought, of

* "Pilgrim to Old Boston" in *Our Old Home*.

* *Bibliographical, Antiquarian, and Picturesque Tour in the Northern Counties of England and Scotland*, I, 213 (London, 1838).

Dr. Burton himself, whom Romney likely knew. These, said Richard Cumberland, were raffled off by Romney for what he could get for them in his days of poverty.* The Dr. Slop, it is certain, was so disposed of at Kendal. No further details of the comradeship are surely known, though tradition has it that Sterne liked Romney better than Steele, and would have sat to him but for offending the elder colleague. Perhaps Sterne studied with them, for he learned from some source a new manner. Caricature in imitation of Hogarth, he continued to practise, it is true, down to the end of his life. A jolly tail-piece—two cocks fighting—to a pamphlet of 1759 is likely Sterne's; and for the amusement of his friends, he illustrated a copy of the *Sentimental Journey*. But along with sketches of this kind, he tried his hand at ideal portraits in sylvan background, a few of which, though of later date, seem to have survived. While at Rome in 1766, Sterne apparently met Michael Wodhull of Thenford, the translator of Euripides, who was preparing for the press a collection of original poems, some of which had been issued as pamphlets. When the volume appeared in 1772, it contained three illustrations (not in the pamphlets) bearing on the left corner the name of "L. Stern del Romae", and on the right the name of I. A. Faldoni, evidently a misprint for G. A. Faldoni, a well-known engraver of the period. Over these designs of "L. Stern" hangs a mystery that has never been cleared up. It is just possible that they were made by a name-sake of Sterne's—one Lewis Stern (1708-77), who is said to have painted "game and other birds, flowers, fruit, and scriptural subjects in admirable style".† On the other hand, they were attributed to Laurence Sterne, without question, in the first collected edition of his works, brought out by his original publishers in 1780. If the curious designs are Sterne's, they show the humour of the author who did not care to illustrate his own works for the public, but was quite willing to aid a friend. One of them represents a dryad reclining by a sedgy stream and gazing upon an Arcadian landscape. Another, adorning an ode to the Muses, has Pegasus in the

* *European Magazine*, June, 1803.

† *Notes and Queries*, third series, VII, 53.

foreground before the spring Hippocrene, which has just gushed from the solid rock in abundant streams, under the blow of his hoof, still uplifted; and above rises Mount Helicon, thickly wooded up to the temple of the Muses, whither travellers are climbing their way. Much in the same style is the third sketch for a stanza or two in an ode to Miss Sarah Fowler, the loveliest of all maids in the train of the Graces. Poesy stands erect, with lyre resting on her left arm, by a glassy pool that reflects her beauty; and above her head, encircled with a myrtle wreath, hover a group of cupids. With face turned towards Poesy, a deep-breasted nymph—is it Miss Sarah Fowler?—reclines on an urn, from the mouth of which she is pouring a libation of crystal waters into the stream beneath.

During these years of painting when Sterne frequently went into York for a day with Bridges or Steele and Romney, he formed a close friendship with “the Rev. Mr. Blake”, a brother of the cloth with whom he had long been acquainted. The clergyman in question, never yet identified, was beyond doubt the Reverend John Blake, a son of Zachary Blake, rector of Goldsborough and master of the Royal Grammar School in the Horse Fair near York. Ten years younger than Sterne, John Blake graduated from Christ Church, Oxford, Bachelor of Arts in 1743, and Master of Arts in 1746. While still a student at Oxford, he was ordained deacon by the Archbishop of York on June 9, 1745; and priest on June 14, 1747. His long residence at the university indicates that he was preparing himself for the instruction of youth. But in the meantime he served curacies at Wigginton, a small parish on the road midway between York and Sutton, and at St. Saviour’s, an ancient church within the city. On December 2, 1756, he was collated by the Archbishop of York to the living of Catton, on the river Derwent, a few miles above Elvington, the seat of Sterne’s ancestors. His father becoming superannuated by this time, he succeeded him in the Royal Grammar School, under license of the dean and chapter, on May 13, 1757.* Blake was not only a scholar fully

* With the exception of his election to the grammar school, all of Blake’s ecclesiastical appointments, including his admission to holy orders, are recorded in the *Institutions* of the York Diocese.

equipped for his post; he was also an active citizen whose name appears at intervals in the *York Courant*, as manager of the charity schools and contributor to the county hospital.

Through the summer and autumn of 1758, Sterne and Blake were engaged in a brisk correspondence, which was carried on by special messengers between York and Sutton. At that time the young master of the grammar school was in sore distress over the miscarriage of proposals for the hand of a "Miss Ash", a small heiress, living across the street with her widowed mother. The woman whom he wished to marry was perhaps Margaret, daughter of Elizabeth Ash, widow, who is described in her will as residing in the parish of St. John's, Micklegate, and possessing an estate at Tollerton. Sterne, who was called in for advice about the marriage settlement, warned his friend against a crafty grandmother, and an unscrupulous lawyer and justice of the peace, one John Stanhope, who was trying to enter the case. "The whole appears", wrote Sterne, remembering his Rabelais, "what I but too shrewdly suspected, a contexture of plots against your fortune and person, grand mama standing first in the *dramatis personae*, the Loup Garou, or raw head and bloody bones, to frighten Master Jacky into silence, and make him go to bed with Missy, *supperless* and in peace——Stanhope, the lawyer, behind the scenes, ready to be call'd in to do his part, either to frighten or outwit you, in case the terror of grand mama should not do the business without him. Miss's part was to play them off upon your good nature in their turns, and give proper reports how the plot wrought. But more of this allegory another time. In the meanwhile, our stedfast council and opinion is, to treat with Stanhope upon no terms either in person or proxy. * * * Keep clear of him by all means, and for this additional reason, namely, that was he call'd in either at first or last, you lose the advantage as well as opportunity of an honorable retreat which is in your power the moment they reject your proposals, but will never be so again after you refer to him." Sterne's guiding hand seemed at times to be bringing the affair to a happy conclusion, but in the end he was unable to cope with the strategy of the astute lawyer; for Blake did not marry his

“Miss Ash”; and the Margaret Ash, with whom we have identified her, became the wife of William Clark of Goodmanham, Yorkshire, where, according to the will of her mother,* which was drawn by Stanhope, Mrs. Elizabeth Ash held the right of presentation to the parish church and rectory.

“Mrs. Ash and Miss” were much annoyed, there are reasons for thinking, by the interference of the Vicar of Sutton. When Blake came out to Sutton to dine and confer with Sterne, it was his custom to make a secret of it to “the ladies over the way”; and when Sterne, obedient to his friend’s “whistle”, hurried off to York, he sometimes chose the evening, that he might not be discovered by those whom he would not fall in with for “fifty pounds”. There were harmless secrets, too, which the vicar wished to keep from Mrs. Sterne. “I tore off”, runs an exquisite passage in a letter to Blake, “I tore off the bottom of yours before I let my wife see it, *to save a Lye*. However, she has since observed the curtailment, and seem’d very desirous of knowing what it contain’d—which I conceal, and only said ’twas something that no way concerned *her or me*; so say the same if she interrogates.” Tell a lie to save a lie is a saying that would have done honour to Lord Bacon. The philosopher’s *tell a lie to find a troth* lacks the colour as well as the humour of the clergyman’s mandate to his brother in the cure of souls.

Eventually Sterne found it inconvenient to have Blake’s letters lying about the rectory, and so he burned them one by one as they arrived and were read. On the other hand, Blake preserved those he received from Sterne. Forty years ago they were owned by Mr. A. H. Hudson of York, who remembers them “as very long, written upon foolscap, and very amusing”. From him they passed into a private collection, and thence to a dealer who disposed of them singly. Incomplete, mutilated, and out of chronological order, they were published by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in his memoir of Sterne.

Despite their incompleteness, these letters to Blake are quite sufficient to let us into what Sterne was doing near the

* The will of Mrs. Elizabeth Ash was proved in the Prerogative Court of York, Jan. 22, 1774.

close of his residence at Sutton. Extracts from them have already been quoted for Sterne's ventures in farming. The life of a rural parson, one may see, was fast becoming irksome to him. Though the year brought large returns in oats and barley, the harvesting and threshing of his grain, which at one time seemed in danger of sprouting, kept him at home away from his friends at York. Once or twice he complained of bad roads and bad weather, of which he stood in mortal terror, for the damps of the York valley brought on his cough and asthma. One rainy night it was ten o'clock before the vicar and his wife reached Sutton after a visit to York "owing to vile accidents to which Journiers are exposed".

Again on a morning when they were ready to take a wheel into the city to be with their friend on his birthday, they were prevented by a terrible downpour. So in the afternoon Sterne sent into York his "sinful Amen"—the facetious name for his clerk—to tell Blake how the matter stood and to say that he was considering the affair with Miss Ash "in all its shapes and circumstances". We really would have come in person, said Sterne, if we could. "We have waited dress'd and ready to set out ever since nine this morning, in hopes to snatch any Intermission of one of the most heavy rains I ever knew,—but we are destined not to go,—for the day grows worse and worse upon our hands, and the sky gathering in on all sides leaves no Prospect of any but a most dismal going and coming, and not without danger, as the roads are full of Water—What remains, but that we undress ourselves and wish you absent, what we would most gladly have wish'd you present—all Happiness and many fair and less ominous Birth Days, than our prospect affords us." "I wish to God", to combine other letters, "you could some day ride out next week, and breakfast and dine with us. * * * However, I will come over at your desire, but it cannot be tomorrow, because all hands are to be employed in cutting my barley, which is now shaking with this vile wind—however, the next day (Friday) I will be with you by twelve and eat a portion of your own dinner and confer till three o'clock, in case the day is fair, if not the day after, &c., &c."

To free himself from local entanglements, Sterne was

planning to lease his lands and tithes, in the expectation of peace and happiness for the next year and ever after. But that was not yet. His affairs, he complained, had been thrown into utter confusion by a parliamentary election that took place in the autumn of 1758. To add to Sterne's worries, the health of his daughter Lydia, now eleven years old, was causing him great anxiety. On rising one morning with the intention of an early start for York, he found Lydia so far relapsing that he sent a messenger instead with "two geoses" to say that he must "stay and wait till the afternoon to see if my poor girl can be left. She is very much out of all sorts; and our operator here, though a very penetrating man, seems puzzled about her case. If something favourable does not turn out to-day about her case, I will send for Dealtry", that is, Dr. John Dealtry, a Whig physician at York. His own health, too, was fast breaking under the strain.

Sterne nevertheless managed to ride into York every week or two except in the harvest season. He took his own turn in the cathedral on the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, coming in early for breakfast with Blake; and he was again forced out of his "shell in Xmas week to preach Innocents" in place of Thomas Hurdis, Prebendary of Strensall. The sermon on the latter occasion seems to have been the one entitled *The Character of Herod*, as published in the usual collections. Sterne set out with "Rachel weeping for her children", but soon broke from his text and the scant Biblical narrative for a portrait of Herod on the lines of Josephus. Herod's complicated character—his generosity and munificence and cruelty—was "summed up in three words—That he was a man of unbounded ambition, who stuck at nothing to gratify it". The preacher closed with a story to the point out of Plutarch, followed by a wish that God in his mercy might "defend mankind from future experiments" in the slaughter of innocent people.

When Mrs. Sterne accompanied her husband into York for a day with their friends or "to make her last marketings for the year", one or both of them would dine with Thomas Bridges and his wife, or at the house of the Rev. Charles Cowper, Prebendary of Riccall. Sterne rather preferred to

leave his wife with Mrs. Cowper on an afternoon, and to go by himself to the concert at the Assembly Rooms, not only for the music but for a chat with Marmaduke Fothergill the younger, or other friends that he was likely to fall in with there. In the round of visits he took in Dr. Fountayne, if the dean were in town, Jack Taylor, Mr. Blake, and "my poor mother", whose "affair", says a letter, "is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, hers". After a long period of misunderstanding and estrangement, a reconciliation between mother and son had evidently been brought about by her acceptance of the allowance that was offered to her many years before. Blake, it would seem, from a dark hint or two, had acted as mediator. For some purpose, at any rate, he was doling out money at York and sending accounts of it over to Sutton. If Sterne had time, it was his custom, though the letters say nothing about it, to stroll into the coffee-room of the George, a fine old hostelry in Coney Street, "where those who drank little wine and did not choose too much expence, might read the newspapers". To those who liked to sit there and gossip, he was well known for "a number of pleasant repartees", one of which has survived. The general drift of the story is probably true, for Sterne let it pass and Hall-Stevenson repeated an abridgement of it in the memoir of his friend.

"There was", according to the more elaborate version of the newspapers,* "a troop of horse in the town, and a gay young fellow, spoiled by the free education of the world, but with no real harm in him, was one of the officers. This gay boy, who loved all freedom in discourse, therefore hated a parson. Poor Yorick was obliged to hear healths he did not like; and would only shuffle about, or pretend deafness; but the hour was come, when these pretences were to pass no longer. The captain was in the middle of a Covent-garden story, loud, indecent, and profane in his expressions; when poor Yorick entered, he stopped on a sudden, and began, with all possible contempt and ill usage, to abuse the clergy, fixing his eye on Yorick, and pointing to him as an example on every occasion. Yorick pretended, as long as he could with

* For example, *The London Chronicle*, May 3-6, 1760.

any decency, not to hear his rudeness; but when that became impossible, he walked up and gravely said to him: 'Sir, I'll tell you a story. My father is an officer; and he's so brave himself, that he is fond of everything else that's brave, even to his dog; you must know we have at this time one of the finest creatures in the world, of this kind; he is the handsomest dog you ever saw, the most spirited in the world, and yet the best natured that can be imagined; so lively, that he charms everybody; but he has a cursed trick that spoils all; he never sees a clergyman, but he instantly flies at him.'—— 'Pray how long has he had that trick?' says the captain.—— 'Sir,' replies Yorick, 'ever since he was a PUPPY.' " "The young man", adds Hall-Stevenson, "felt the keenness of the satire, turned upon his heel, and left Sterne in triumph."

II

Whenever Sterne felt the need of more complete relaxation than was afforded by York and the neighbouring squires, he had but to take a trip to Scarborough, or to drive over to Skelton for a week or a fortnight with his friend John Hall-Stevenson. On these excursions his wife never went with him. Sterne and Hall-Stevenson, when we last saw them together, were reading Rabelais under the great walnut tree at Jesus College. John Hall—his friend always dropped the Stevenson—was a son of Joseph Hall of Durham by Catharine, sister and heir to Lawson Trotter of Skelton Castle. After trifling away three or four years at Cambridge, the young man left the university without a degree, and made the usual tour of France and Italy. Returning home towards 1740, he married in that year Anne, daughter of Ambrose Stevenson, Esq., of the Manor House in the parish of Lanchester, Durham, and assumed his wife's surname along with his own. In after times he regarded the act as "premature", for his wife's property fell short of his expectations. But as if to make amends for his own want of foresight, his mother died a few months after his marriage; and his uncle, Lawson Trotter, "a noted Jacobite", was soon driven from the country for the part he took in the insurrection of 1745.

Skelton thus passed by right of his mother to Hall-Stevenson as the eldest son, then barely twenty-eight years old. While Sterne was wielding a pen for the House of Hanover, Hall-Stevenson was brandishing a sword. After the battle of Preston Pans, he formed the neighbouring bucks into a company of horsemen under General Oglethorpe, who was back from Georgia. They were all finely mounted, wrote a York merchant of the time, "with every man a horse and some two", and they acted as "a flying squadron, to harass the enemy on their march and to give intelligence". "They make more noise here", it is significantly added, "than they deserve, their number being much magnified."* The eventful period over, Hall-Stevenson settled at Skelton, where he continued to the end of his days in the easy, self-indulgent life which he had begun at Cambridge, complaining now and then of his scant fortune and of a mortgage of £2000 on his estate to a younger brother.

Hall-Stevenson possessed "a fine library", rich in old tomes running back into the sixteenth century, among which he sat and read on dull days and long winter evenings, now and then scribbling a political satire, or loose verse-tale in imitation of La Fontaine and other French fabulists, which were issued in the form of anonymous pamphlets with notes and quotations from Homer, Vergil, and Lucian. There was commonly a facetious dedication to himself, as the man he most respected, to the vacant reader, or to the macaronies of Medmenham Abbey and Pall Mall. The author made no claim to finished verse, writing, he said, like Grisset, only to save himself from ennui. Horace Walpole discovered "a vast deal of original humour and wit" in Mr. Hall's verses; but to Gray they "seemed to be absolute madness". Here and there they contain clever phrases, as in the opening lines

* "Letter of Stephen Thompson, a merchant, to Vice-Admiral [Henry] Medley" in *Report on Manuscripts of Lady du Cane presented to Parliament by Command of his Majesty*, 77-78 (London, 1905). A fine account of Hall-Stevenson is given by J. W. Ord, *History and Antiquities of Cleveland* (London, 1846). See also Surtees, *Durham*, II, 291-92; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, III, 86-88; Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography*, 453-54 (Edinburgh, 1860); and Paver, *Supplement to Consolidated Yorkshire Visitations* (British Museum, *Additional MS* 29651).

of a reply to a savage attack by Smollett in the *Critical Review*:

“Ye judging Caledonian Pedlars,
That to a scribbling World give Law
Laid up engarretted, like Medlars,
Ripening asperity in Straw.”

In his humour, Hall-Stevenson renamed his seat Crazy Castle. It was a rambling pile of stone rising in a series of moss-covered terraces from a stagnant and melancholy moat, the abode of frogs and water-rats, and lying on the slope of a wooded ravine, two miles and a half inland from Saltburn-by-the-Sea. At one time, its master planned extensive restorations, but Sterne dissuaded him from them, saying, in remembrance of his own repairs at Sutton, that “the sweet visions of architraves, friezes and pedaments” were but the bait of the devil to lead one on into cares, curses and debts. Better follow, he admonished his friend, the advice of St. Paul to his disciples, that they should “sell both coat and waistcoat and go rather without shirt or sword, than leave no money in their scrip to go to Jerusalem with”, that is, to London or Paris or any place where congregate fashion and pleasure. For the amusement of his friends and Lawson Trotter, who was travelling abroad, Hall-Stevenson made a sketch of the castle, or had it made, as a frontispiece to a volume of *Crazy Tales*, which opened with a facetious verse-description of some of the details. Midway in the description, the verses hobble on—

“A turrit also you may note,
Its glory vanish’d like a dream,
Transform’d into a pigeon-coat,
Nodding beside the sleepy stream.

“Over the Castle hangs a tow’r,
Threatening destruction ev’ry hour,
Where owls, and bats, and the jackdaw,
Their Vespers and their Sabbath keep,
All night scream horribly, and caw,
And snore all day, in horrid sleep.

“Oft at the quarrels and the noise
Of scolding maids or idle boys;
Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like Legions of damn’d souls,
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky.”

A very handsome and agreeable young man, Hall-Stevenson was thoroughly liked by friends and chance-acquaintance, for whom “he kept a full-spread board and wore down the steps of his cellar”. Alexander Carlyle, the Scotch divine, who crossed his path at the Dragon Inn, Harrogate, thought him “a highly accomplished and well-bred gentleman”, and was drawn to him by a “mild and courteous manner”. Mrs. Sterne, who saw him occasionally for a day at Sutton, had some misgivings about her husband’s intimacy with him; but she readily admitted that he was “a fellow of wit, though humorous; a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic; and (bating the love of women) as honest as *gold*”. It is a little strange at first sight that Sterne should have made out of him Eugenius, the discreet adviser of Yorick, for Hall-Stevenson was anything but discreet. And yet he was a man of the world who knew how to still a quarrel and keep his friends all good-natured towards one another. In spite of his idleness, he carried away from Cambridge a knowledge of the classics sufficient to quote from them freely, and from his travels on the Continent was brought back an interest in French and Italian literature. As in the case of Sterne, Locke’s *Essay on the Human Understanding* was a book never to be forgotten.

Except for trips to London and the northern watering-places to meet friends, Hall-Stevenson shut himself up in Crazy Castle, where an inactive life brought on rheumatism and various disorders of the digestion, which were aggravated rather than helped by a free use of current nostrums. Some years of this treatment, attended with painful results, and he developed into a humorous hypochondriac of the family one may read of in *Peregrine Pickle* or *Humphry Clinker*. It was his whim to lay all his ailments to the damps of

Yorkshire, especially to the cold and raw northeast wind, which was with him a synonym for death. His sleeping room, it is said, was in sight of the weather-cock—the cock was an arrow—over the old clock-tower shown in his drawing of the castle. On rising in the morning, the master looked first toward the arrow to see what the weather was to be; and if it pointed towards the northeast, he went back to bed, drew the curtains, and imagined himself *in extremis*. Sterne, who frequently bantered Hall-Stevenson on his nerves and the weather, in his letters as well as in *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*, attempted a cure while on a visit to Crazy Castle. On a night, says the tale, he climbed the clock-tower, or engaged a boy to do so, and tied down the weather-cock in a westerly direction. After that all went well for some days until the cord broke and the arrow shot round to the northeast. Hall-Stevenson then took to his bed and Sterne went home.

The master of Skelton formed his merry Yorkshire friends into a convivial club, called the Demoniacs, in imitation of the Rabelaisian Monks of Medmenham Abbey, who were then creating great scandal in southern England. Medmenham Abbey was an ancient Cistercian monastery, beautifully situated, “by hanging woods and soft meadows”, on the Thames, between Great Marlow and Henley. In this retired place, where once dwelt the old monks, a new and profane order was established by Sir Francis Dashwood, afterwards Baron Le Despenser, Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Chancellor of the Exchequer, etc.,—a man seldom sober. With him were associated John Wilkes the politician, Paul Whitehead the poet, Sir William Stanhope, Lord Melcombe Regis, the Earl of Sandwich, and “other hands of the first water” up to twelve—the number of the Apostles. They called themselves Franciscans after their founder. Paul Whitehead, their secretary and steward, was known as St. Paul. Besides the first twelve, there was a lower order of twelve, who acted as servants to their superiors. Over the grand entrance was written for all who entered, *Fay ce que voudras*, which was also the famous inscription on Rabelais’s Abbey of Thélème. Every summer and at other favourable

times, the Monks retired to their abbey for the worship of Satan and the Paphian Aphrodite in parody of the rites of the Church of Rome. On one occasion, it was a current story, when they were in the height of their mirth, invoking his Satanic majesty to come among them in person, Wilkes let loose a baboon decked in the conventional insignia of the devil. The consternation that followed, says the chronicler, was simply indescribable. The revellers were terrified nearly out of their senses, for they thought that the devil had really heeded their summons. The baboon, as frightened as they, leaped upon the shoulders of Lord Sandwich, who was celebrating the *messe noire*; whereupon the wicked nobleman fell upon his face, imploring first the devil and then heaven to have mercy upon his miserable soul. Soon after this incident, which could not be kept secret, the society was disbanded.*

The direct connection between this abandoned brotherhood and the Demoniacs who gathered under the roof of Crazy Castle is undeniable. Hall-Stevenson and Sterne afterwards numbered Wilkes, Dashwood, and other of the Monks among their intimate London friends. Hall-Stevenson may have visited Medmenham, and Dashwood, with little doubt, sometimes came down to Skelton, where he was known as "the Privy Counsellor". Sterne when away addressed the company at Skelton as "the household of faith" and sent them, in parody of the words of St. Paul, the apostolic benediction. In justice, however, to the Demoniacs, it must be said at once that they could have been only a faint reflection of the Monks of Medmenham. They were a company of noisy Yorkshire squires and parsons who assembled at Skelton for out-of-door sports during the day and for drinking and jesting through the night. To quote their host:

"Some fell to fiddling, some to fluting,
Some to shooting, some to fishing
Others to pishing and disputing."

* For Medmenham Abbey, see Charles Johnstone, *Chrysal, or the History of a Guinea*, vol. III, bk. II, chs. XVII-XXIV (London, 1760-65); *Letters to and from Mr. Wilkes*, I, 34-50 (London, 1769); and G. Lipscomb, *History of Buckinghamshire*, III, 615-16 (London, 1847).

As at Medmenham, every one was expected to follow his own inclinations, doing whatsoever he pleased. "Why should a man", to paraphrase Rabelais, the originator of the idea, "bring his life into subjection to rules and the hours? Why should he not give full rein to will and instinct?—eat, drink, sleep, or perhaps labour, because nature draws him that way and not because custom calls or the bell rings?" Among the Demoniacs, Hall-Stevenson was known as Antony, probably because he was at the same time a recluse, and yet in the prime essential wholly unlike the saint whose name he bore. Disliking field sports, he kept much within doors. But when Sterne came over, squire and parson made excursions together to Guisborough for sentimental visits with "Mrs. C—— Miss C——, &c"; or they drove over to Saltburn, where they amused themselves on an afternoon by racing chariots along the sandy beach, "with one wheel in the sea". Of all pastimes that took Sterne out of doors, none pleased him quite so much as this; and none could be more exhilarating. Over sands hard and firm enough for the modern automobile, the two Crazyites might run their horses for five miles to the north, even to Redcar, and then turn about for the exciting course homewards through the fresh spray of the ocean.

The fisherman of the group was the Rev. Robert Lascelles, formerly of Durham. Graduating from Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1739, he joined Hall-Stevenson's "flying squadron" against the Jacobite raiders, and subsequently obtained the vicarage of Gilling, by Richmond in the West Riding. Late in life he published a volume of merry verses on angling, shooting, and coursing. This man of the cloth, whose fellowship Sterne especially enjoyed for his jesting, was nicknamed Panty, cut short for familiar speech from Pantagruel, the hero of Rabelais's romance. We read, too, of Andrew Irvine, a Cambridge doctor of theology, and master of the grammar school at Kirkleatham, a short distance away. Because of his resemblance to an Irishman, he was renamed Paddy Andrew.

Among other Demoniacs, not so easily identified, were the men whom Sterne affectionately addressed as "My dear Garland, Gilbert, and Cardinal Scroope". The first of the three was Nathaniel Garland, a country gentleman; and the

last was likely a Yorkshire parson. An architect appears, too, under the Spanish disguise of Don Pringello, who was called over to rebuild Crazy Castle; but so great was his admiration for "the venerable remains", that he could only be prevailed upon "to add a few ornaments suitable to the stile and taste of the age it was built in". Could these men be uncovered they might prove as interesting as "Zachary", that is, Zachary Moore, whose name found its way into local history. He was the spendthrift of the company. Inheriting a rich and extensive manor at Lofthouse, some ten miles south of Skelton, he entered upon a career of riot and prodigality. "There is a tradition", says the historian of the district,* "that during his travels on the Continent his horses' shoes were made of silver; and so careless was he of money, that he would not turn his horses' head if they got loose or fell off, but replaced them with new ones". Among his strange caprices, apparently discordant with his character, was that of building a school at Lofthouse for the instruction of children in the Scriptures, the catechism, and the prayer-book. After thirty years of dissipation, he completed "the laborious work of getting to the far end of a great fortune"; and was then deserted "by the gay butterflies who had sported about him in his summer hour". By the aid of his London friends, among whom were men of "royal and ducal rank", he obtained an ensigncy in the British army and soon afterwards died at Gibraltar. Hall-Stevenson lamented his absence from Skelton in an ode beginning—

"What sober heads hast thou made ake?
How many hast thou kept from nodding?
How many wise-ones, for thy sake,
Have flown to thee, and left off plodding?"

Two colonels were sometimes with the company. One was "Colonel Hall"—George Lawson Hall, a brother of the master of Skelton, who married a daughter of Lord William Manners, and entered the army. The other colonel was Charles Lee, at the time an officer on half pay. He fought

* Ord, *History and Antiquities of Cleveland*, 275-78.

in America throughout the French and Indian War, and settling afterwards in Virginia and obtaining a major-generalship in the Continental army, he sought to wrest the supreme command from Washington. "Savage Lee", as people called him, was already a quarrelsome companion, whom Hall-Stevenson found hard to manage. More remotely connected with the Demoniacs was William Hewitt—"old Hewitt"—"a very sensible old gentleman but a very great humourist", who lived much abroad. Smollett, who met him at Scarborough and in Italy, told the story of his curious ending. Being attacked by a painful malady while at Florence in 1767, Hewitt resolved to take himself off, like Atticus, by starvation. "He saw company", says Smollett in a note to *Humphry Clinker*, "to the last, cracked his jokes, conversed freely, and entertained his guests with music. On the third day of his fast, he found himself entirely freed of his complaint, but refused taking sustenance. He said, the most disagreeable part of the voyage was past, and he should be a cursed fool indeed to put about ship when he was just entering the harbour." Persisting in this resolution, he soon finished his course.

The group of strange humourists that gyrated round Hall-Stevenson changed of course from year to year. One would fall out and another would be found to take his place. But Paddy and Panty, who lived near by, might be counted upon at all times; and Sterne never missed, if he could help it, the great conclave of demons that assembled in October. "A jollier set", says the host, "never met, either before or since the flood." At night there were "joyous deliriums over the burgundy", when each contributed his share to the amusement and the jesting. Sterne was the fiddler. His love for the violin and cello and music in general, comes out again and again in *Tristram Shandy* and elsewhere. The speech and movements of his characters, would one but observe it, are all deftly attuned to musical harmony. What, for example, would my uncle Toby be, as he lays his persuasive hand upon your heart, without "that soft and irresistible *piano* of voice, which the nature of the *argumentum ad hominem* absolutely requires"? It was a shepherd's pipe

that gave the exquisite tone to the scene with Maria by the roadside in Bourbonnais: "Adieu, *Maria*:—adieu, poor hapless damsel!—some time, but not *now*, I may hear thy sorrows from thy own lips—but I was deceived; for that moment she took her pipe and told me such a tale of woe with it, that I rose up, and with broken and irregular steps walk'd softly to my chaise." Yorick, it will be remembered from *Tristram Shandy*, quaintly characterised his sermons, as he marked and tied them up for future use, by an appropriate musical term. Most of them had *moderato* written across their backs, but here and there is an *adagio*, a *con strepito*, or *con l'arco*, or *senza l'arco*, etc. These are but examples. If they carry us a little away from Skelton, we certainly are brought back to an evening at the castle in that passage where Sterne tunes his *Cremona* and snaps a string:

"Ptr.. r..r..ing twing—twang—prut—trut—'tis a cursed bad fiddle.—Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no?—trut.. prut..—They should be *fifths*.—'Tis wickedly strung—tr...a.e.i.o.u.—twang.—The bridge is a mile too high, and the sound post absolutely down,—else—trut.. prut—hark! 'tis not so bad a tone.—Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle, dum. * * * Twaddle diddle, tweddle diddle,—twiddle diddle,—twoddle diddle,—twuddle diddle,—prut trut—krish—krash—krush."

The jesting, hints here and there suggest, was racy and salacious, as one should expect from avowed Pantagruelists. There were running plays upon words, especially Latin words, for the facetious quibbles in fashion with Rabelais and the learned humourists of the Renaissance—varied by the retelling of old tales from collections in the French and Italian tongues. For their correspondence Sterne and Hall-Stevenson devised a Latin of their own after the style of the famous *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*. The only one of these letters between Antony and Laurentius now extant was written by Sterne in the midst of noisy companions at a York coffee-house, and sent over to Skelton on the eve of his setting out for London. As a Demoniac, Sterne defined for his friend in this letter the nature of the evil spirit that was

driving him from home to the gaiety of the metropolis: "*Diabolus iste qui me intravit, non est diabolus vanus, at consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus, qui non vult sinere me esse solum * * * et tu es possessus cum eodem malo spiritu qui te tenet in deserto esse tentatum ancillis tuis, et perturbatum uxore tua.*" If we had a sure key to the book, we should doubtless find that of the large body of jests and stories in *Tristram Shandy*, a large number had once been heard at Skelton. As if it were so, many are the glimpses of Yorick and Eugenius in conversation by the fireside and out in the fields. Especially graphic is the scene where Yorick, while telling a tawdry story "of a nun who fancied herself a shell-fish", is interrupted by his friend, who rises, walks around the table, and takes him by the hand. Then there is that smart repartee in parody of Alexander's reply to Parmenio, as given by Longinus *On the Sublime*:

"If I was you, quoth *Yorick*, I would drink more water, *Eugenius*—And, if I was you, *Yorick*, replied *Eugenius*, so would I."

Sterne's jests, commonly good-natured, could be at times sharp and bitter, for he went into wit-combats with the intention of winning, though he might come out of them, he says, "like a fool". On one occasion his host and Panty took him to task for his brutal treatment of a coxcomb, like "the puppy" at the George Inn, who had pushed his way into their society. "The man", said Sterne in memory of it, "lost temper with me for no reason upon earth but that I could not fall down and worship a brazen image of learning and eloquence, which he set up, to the persecution of all true believers—I sat down upon *his altar*, and whistled in the time of his divine service—and broke down his carved work, and kicked his incense pot to the D——, so he retreated, *sed non sine felle in corde suo*".

From this jesting and story-telling, Hall-Stevenson took the hint for his *Crazy Tales*, in which eleven of the Demoniacs relate gay intrigues "to promote good humour and cheerfulness" through a night at Skelton. Panty's tale of "The Cavalier Nun" was developed from an old monkish distich, which, slightly varied, Sterne long afterwards employed again

to give point to *An Impromptu*, run off "in a few moments without stopping his pen", while the author was "thoroughly soused". Zachary chose his theme from Bandello, drawing a parallel between the Italian bishop and Sterne. The Privy-Counsellor presented an imitation of Chaucer. Antony adjusted an old tale to the boarding-school; and Sterne, beginning with the great walnut tree and other reminiscences of Cambridge, wandered off into a cock-and-bull story, such as fitted his character, though not one of the best of its kind.

Like these Chaucerian tales of Hall-Stevenson's, *Tristram Shandy*, it is almost needless to add in conclusion, also had its living counterpart in *Crazy Castle*, but after a larger and different manner. Not that Sterne, so far as we can divine him, exactly transferred to his book living portraits of the men whom he met over the rich burgundy. But it was under the hospitable roof of Skelton that he associated, in jest, argument, and dispute, with those half-mad oddities of human nature which he knew how to transform, by the aid of other memories, into Eugenius, Mr. Walter Shandy, and my uncle Toby.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARSON IN HIS LIBRARY

GOOD fellowship over bright burgundy was doubtless quite sufficient for drawing Sterne to Skelton for a week or two in October and oftener. But there was another attraction for him in the library of old books that had been long collecting by his host and the family before him. Indeed, writers on Sterne, repeating what was said a century ago, have given wide currency to the tradition that the humourist found and read at Skelton most of those strange volumes that go to the learning and adornment of *Tristram Shandy*. Though the tradition is far from the truth, Sterne's intimacy with Hall-Stevenson may have led him to reading curious books for one of his recreations in the long and obscure years at Sutton. We may fancy him on his visits to Skelton poring over his friend's big folios and taking three or four of them with him as he drove home. Nearer at hand was the library of his dean and chapter, rich in manuscripts, and old treatises on law, medicine, and divinity, wherein he could have met with his humorous instances of casuistry and misplaced learning.

But the books that became a part of Sterne's mental equipment must have been his daily companions at Sutton. When he emerges from obscurity, he appears at once as a book collector on his own account. If the first money from the sale of *Tristram Shandy* went to the purchase of a carriage and a pair of horses, the surplus from the second instalment was left with a bookseller for seven hundred books which were "set up in my best room". Before his fame and the competency that came with it, Sterne's purchases must have been more restricted, but even then his income was not so small as to leave nothing for his humour. In the eighteenth century, York was the centre of the northern

CRAZY CASTLE.



From the frontispiece to Crazy Tales

book trade. From the surrounding district, libraries of country gentlemen were sent in to Cæsar Ward, John Todd, and other dealers to be disposed of at auction or private sale. Auctions were also held every few weeks at inns and town-halls in the neighbourhood. For a few shillings Sterne could have procured beautiful folios that would now bring a handful of guineas, if they could be had at all. To Sterne's reading in this formative period, we have a trustworthy, though incomplete, index in *Tristram Shandy*. He there reflects of course himself and Hall-Stevenson in the opposite tastes of the two Shandys, both of whom are collectors, one making a specialty of military architecture and the other of the learned humourists. Among the *facetiae* that Mr. Walter Shandy most prized, were Bouchet's *Serées*, and Bruscambille's *Pensées Facetieuses*, including a prologue upon long noses, which was bought of a London dealer for three half-crowns. The story of the purchase at the book-stall Sterne related with the passion of the bibliophile: "There are not three Bruscambille's in Christendom—said the stall-man, except what are chain'd up in the libraries of the curious. My father flung down the money as quick as lightning—took Bruscambille into his bosom—hied home from Piccadilly to Coleman-street with a treasure, without taking his hand once off from Bruscambille all the way." When in a confidential mood one day on a visit to Stillington Hall, Sterne told his friends there, as John Croft remembered it, what books he read and studied most. He placed first the *Moyen de Parvenir* of Béroalde de Verville, and added Montaigne, Rabelais, Marivaux, and Dr. Joseph Hall, "Bishop of Exeter in King James the First's reign". But he forgot, as was Sterne's way, to mention many an author that ought to have been on the list. His fireside books were as odd as the men with whom he associated at Crazy Castle. From them he drew and then cast them aside, in just the same way as he would take up his pencil for a caricature of his wife, or his gun for an afternoon with the partridges.

First in the catalogue of books read by the Vicar of Sutton were three of the world's greatest humourists—Lucian, "my dear Rabelais, and dearer Cervantes". With Lucian, by

whose ashes he swore the "oath referential", Sterne was less familiar than with the other two; but we must suppose that the *Dialogues*, read at Cambridge, were taken up again in the Sutton period, for he could, when in the mood for it, fall into Lucian's tone of gay mockery. The presence of Cervantes, whom he knew through Skelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, is felt in one place or another of every volume of *Tristram Shandy*, from the introductory sketches of Yorick and Dr. Slop on to the end, through scores of passages pervaded by this "gentle Spirit of sweetest humour". Rabelais, though Sterne sometimes ranked him after Cervantes, was really, I should say, first in his affections. A volume of *Gargantua* or of *Pantagruel*, Yorick was accustomed to carry in "his right-hand coat pocket", that it might be ready for the amusement of his friends, as they drew up to the fire after supper. On these occasions Yorick read to them, not from the original French—for Sterne had little acquaintance with that, though he could pick it out by the help of Cotgrave's dictionary,—but from the current version of Ozell, a London scribbler, who spent his days in mutilating foreign classics for English readers. Ozell, text, notes, and all, Sterne had well-nigh by heart, and found them most serviceable in the act of composition. Without Rabelais, his jests, whims, anecdotes, and splendid extravagances, there would never have been a Sterne as we now know him.*

Rabelais, the most constant of his passions, drew Sterne on into the facetious tales and verses of the later Pantagruelists, both French and English, among whom he also luxuriated. The Guillaume Bouchet who delighted the heart of Mr. Walter Shandy, was a magistrate at Poitiers, where his *Serées*, or *Evening Conferences*, three volumes in the whole, began to appear in 1584. In this vivacious work, Bouchet and his friends meet at one another's house on appointed evenings for a light supper and to relate incidents that they have read of in books or heard of among their neighbours.

* Sterne's immense obligations to Ozell's translation of Rabelais are indicated in the marginal notes to the Grenville copy of *Tristram Shandy* in the British Museum. For the humourist's borrowings from Rabelais and other French writers, see also John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne*, two vols. (second edition, London, 1812).

Some one of them usually tells the main story, while the others break in with their contributions to the theme, be it of wine, water, or women, the fine arts, physicians, lawyers, or the clergy. The volumes of Bouchet are an epitome of the Gallic wit that lies scattered in the old *fabliaux* and innumerable *contes*, the aim of which is mirth and laughter.

Of books of this kind Sterne rightly gave his preference to the *Moyen de Parvenir* or *How to Succeed*, which made its appearance in 1610, without the author's name. It was written, the critics have established, by Béroalde de Verville, a canon of the Cathedral of Tours, otherwise known for several imitations of Rabelais. As in Bouchet, the plan is a symposium, where gather for conversation and story-telling Béroalde's friends under the names of famous men and women of antiquity, such as Cæsar, Socrates, and Sappho. Laughter, eating, drinking, and sleeping are proclaimed the four cardinal virtues. The conversations run from theme to theme without any apparent connection at first sight; but they are really all ordered with great skill, the last word of each discourse giving occasion for the one following. Next to Rabelais's profusion of wit, no other book has quite so many analogies with *Tristram Shandy*.

Bruscambille, another favourite with Sterne, was the *nom de théâtre* of a comedian named Deslauriers, whose *Fantasies* or *Pensées Facetieuses* appeared in 1612. The author imagines himself on the stage addressing his audience in whimsical prologues, harangues, and paradoxes on cuckoldry, pedantry, long and short noses, or in defence of lying or of telling the truth, as whim may seize him. Bruscambille was a perfect master of what the French call *galimatias*, a mad flow of speech in which incongruity is piled upon incongruity for comic effect. "I met", says Bruscambille, to give an extreme example of his nonsense, "I met, gentlemen and ladies, last night a large, small man with red hair who had a beard as black as pepper; he had just come from a country where, except for the animals and the people, there was no living soul." How well Sterne learned the art of Bruscambille, everyone knows who has perused his books or letters, though, it should be observed, he never went quite so far as

his original in a reckless topsy-turvy of ideas and phrases. Perhaps he went the farthest when he wrote "A cow broke in (to-morrow morning) to my uncle *Toby's* fortifications and eat up two rations and a half of dried grass, tearing up the sod with it, which faced his horn-work and covered way."

Béroalde, Bouchet, and Bruscombille were all in the vicar's library when it was sold after his death. With them Sterne classed Montaigne, who, though his work is of more serious import, wandered on whimsically, as everybody would have him, from one topic to another, so that the title of any one of his essays gives no clue to the content. Sterne knew his Montaigne well, not in the French but in the fine translation made by Cotton, the accomplished angler; and loved him with the affection of Thackeray, who took him, instead of an opiate, as a bedside book to prattle him to sleep when threatened by insomnia.* Nor should we forget Scarron's comic muse with skirts all bedrabbled, nor the tearful mistress of Marivaux and other French novelists with whom Sterne carried on frequent flirtations. Last in the line (barring the sentimental Marivaux) were the English humourists—Swift and his group—who sought to fill the easy chair left vacant by Rabelais and his French descendants. To Sterne, Swift meant mainly the *Tale of a Tub*, a cock-and-bull story, with digressions upon criticism and madness, digressions upon digressions, and further digressions, which, says the author, serve a book in the way foreign troops serve a state, for they "either subdue the natives or drive them into the most unfruitful corners". Near Swift's *Tub*, doubtless lay, in Sterne's estimation, Dr. John Arbuthnot's *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus*, long ago pointed out as having some resemblance to *Tristram Shandy*, in its humorous dissertations on science and mathematics, education, playthings, and the breeching

* When *Tristram Shandy* first appeared, an English gentleman residing at Geneva wrote out a fanciful sketch of the author as he imagined him from the book, and sent it on to Hall-Stevenson. Amused as well as flattered by the letter, Sterne replied, saying with reference to a conjecture that he was a reader of Montaigne: "'For my conning Montaigne as much as my prayer book'—there you are right again,—but mark a second time, I have not said I admire him as much;—tho' had he been alive, I would certainly have gone twice as far [as you say] to have smoaked a pipe with him, as with Arch-Bishop Laud or his Chaplains (tho' one of 'em was my grandfather).'"—*Morgan Manuscripts*.

of children. The genius of Pope, who bore a hand in the miscellanies of Scriblerus, Sterne took for granted, like the rest of his generation, easily quoting his proverbial lines. The friendship between the poet and his physician, as depicted in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*—the one a satirist and man of letters pestered by friends and foes alike, and the other a faithful counsellor crying “Hold! for God’s sake you’ll offend”—struck Sterne’s fancy especially, for he carried the situation over into *Tristram Shandy* for his Yorick and Eugenius. Finally, he never doubted the truth of Pope’s doctrine of ruling passions, in accordance with which were constructed all of his own characters.

Sterne also dipped into the scribbling underecurrent of the Queen Anne wits for occasional refreshment. There he discovered Tom Brown “of facetious memory”, one of whose anecdotes was turned to a new purpose in the opening paragraph of *Tristram Shandy*; and there he caught sight of two books as mad as any he himself was destined to write. One of them was *An Essay towards the Theory of the Intelligible World*, from the pen of “Gabriel John”, the pseudonym, perhaps, of Tom D’Urfey, the profane wit and dramatist. It appeared, according to the humorous title-page, “in the Year One thousand Seven Hundred &c”, and was to consist “of a Preface, a Postscript and a Little something between”. On one page this “little something between” was reduced to a series of dashes in place of the usual text, with an explanatory note at the left saying, to quote half of it: “The Author very well understands that a good sizable *Hiatus* discovers a very great Genius, there being no Wit in the World more Ideal, and consequently more refined, than what is display’d in these elaborate Pages, that have ne’re a syllable written on them.” The other mad book, the work of John Dunton, a London bookseller and adventurer, bears the title of *A Voyage Round the World, * * * containing the Rare Adventures of Don Kainophilus* (1691). To attract the reader, Dunton employed every sort of type, including whole pages of capitals and black letter, sprinkled with dashes and index-hands. He began his tale with the prenatal history of his hero, and then ran off into a series of cock-rambles which end

nowhere, in order that "people shou'd miss what they expected and find what they never lookt for". When Sterne was charged with plagiarising from Dunton, he wrote to a friend to say that he once met with the book in a London circulating library and took from it "many of his ideas". The very copy of Dunton that Sterne read now rests, it is probable, in the Boston Public Library.*

Not the least charm for Sterne about the old humourists which fell in his way was the quaint erudition that went hand in hand with their frank foolery. After the fashion of the Renaissance, they took all knowledge for their province. Rabelais was a learned physician and Benedictine. Bouchet could not discourse on the virtues of wine without giving first a history of the symposium from the Greeks down through the *amica convivia* of the Romans to the drinking clubs of his own day, embellished throughout with numerous quotations from the ancient poets and historians. Béroalde passed in review the arts and sciences of the time, ridiculing in his progress mathematics, metaphysics, casuistry, and current literature; and setting up the claim that the *Moyen de Parvenir* was "the centre of all books", wherein one might find clearly demonstrated "the reason for all things that have been or ever shall be". Even Dunton's absurd book bore as sub-title *A Pocket Library*; and Arbuthnot—to pass by the better known Swift—ran through, in burlesque, all the arts and sciences, back to their origin among the monkeys of India and Ethiopia, who were our first philosophers. Erudition like this, real or pretended, Sterne greatly enjoyed. It is sometimes said that our classics, ancient and modern, are over edited; that the author is submerged in the annotations.

* This copy was owned by the late James Crossley, an English antiquarian, and after the dispersion of his library in 1885, it found its way into the Boston Public Library (February, 1886). On a fly-leaf, Crossley wrote: "Rodd [Thomas Rodd, the London book-seller] once showed me an original Letter of Sterne in which he mentions this Work, from which he took many of his Ideas and which he had met with in a London Circulating Library. As the present Copy came from Hookham's, whose Bookplate, which was on the original boards, I have pasted opposite, there is little doubt that this was the identical copy read by Sterne." As Hookham's Library was at 15 Old Bond Street, near Sterne's London lodgings, there is good ground for the conjecture with which Crossley closes his valuable note.

Sterne, on the other hand, never finding any fault with learning of this kind, disregarded, as we all well might, the author and bent his mind upon understanding the editor. A good instance of this is his apparent perusal of *Hudibras*, with "large annotations" by the Rev. Zachary Grey, a Cambridge man, among the multitude of which he may have found all that had ever been said about the *homunculus*. A better instance is his use of *Philostratus concerning the Life of Apollonius Tyaneus*, with * * * *Notes upon Each Chapter*, by Charles Blount, the deist. One may imagine Sterne's delight as his eye fell upon Blount's preface to the reader: "Whether kind or unkind, I shall call you neither, for fear lest I be mistaken. * * * As for my *Illustrations*: Notwithstanding they have some coherence with my Text, yet I likewise design'd them as *Philological Essays* upon several Subjects, such as the least hint might present me with". True to his promise, Blount made the old spiritual romance of Philostratus merely the occasion for learned essays, far exceeding in extent the original Greek, on dress, whiskers, swearing, death, *et cetera*, themes which Sterne did not forget, as every reader of him knows, when he came to write *Tristram Shandy*.

Sterne spent some time on Erasmus—on the *Colloquia* and especially on the *Μωρίας ἐγκώμιον*, which had been done into English under the title of *Moriæ Encomium; or a Panegyrick upon Folly*. Erasmus, like Sterne after him, assumed the character of a jester, "playing at pushpin", or "riding astride on a hobby-horse", in his journey through a censure of men and morals. The *Encomium* was adorned "with above fifty curious cuts" by Holbein, of which two would attract Sterne above all others—one representing a fierce wrangle of disputants, and another depicting the instigation of the devil by means of grotesque imps hovering over the head and clawing the hair of their unfortunate victim. From Erasmus, Sterne passed on to the casuists and schoolmen, where he was amused by discourses on the space occupied by souls, the size of hell, debates on "the point of Martin Luther's damnation", "the pudder and racket in Councils about οὐσία and ὑπόστασις,—and in the Schools of the learned about

power and about spirit,—about essences, and about quint-essences,—about substances, and about space”. In the course of this reading, he fell in with the *ars magna* of Raymond Lully; the terrible anathemas of Ernulf, Bishop of Rochester in the eleventh century; the *De Legibus Hebræorum Ritualibus* of Dr. John Spencer, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, wherein he stopped on the learned reasons for and against circumcision; and Sir Robert Brook’s *Graunde Abridgement*, with other works in ecclesiastical law, which tried to explain to him that in certain nice cases, as in that of the Duchess of Suffolk, “the mother is not of kin to her child”.

Beyond doubt Sterne saw the *Utrius Cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica atque Technica Historia* by Robert Flud, a Fellow of the College of Physicians at Oxford, and the first of the English Rosicrucians. The old folio had two dedications, one to the Almighty and the other to James the First. In the first chapter, Flud described, after Trismegistus and Moses, chaos—or the *ens primordiale infinitum, informe*, as his Latin has it,—under the form of a very black smoke or vapour; and for the assistance of the reader’s imagination, he covered two thirds of a page with a black square, writing on each of its four sides *Et sic infinitum*, lest somebody might suppose that there were boundaries to the horrible shadow of undigested matter out of which the Almighty created his universe of worlds and stars. This square became of course Sterne’s page dressed in mourning for the death of “poor Yorick”. Bacon’s essays, we may be sure, were in Sterne’s library, for he quoted from them and modified their phrasing with the greatest ease. He also possessed a copy of *Baconiana, or Genuine Remains of Francis Bacon*, a collection of posthumous miscellanies, which had been brought out anonymously by Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury. One of the strange features of this book was the archbishop’s “Discourse by way of Introduction”, added as a tag at the end of the volume. Sterne was reading the misplaced introduction when he began *Tristram Shandy*, for he “conveyed” a passage from it to his twelfth chapter, and not unlikely derived from the archbishop the notion of insert-

ing his prefaces and dedications midway in his own book. If an introduction may be put after the word *finis*, when all is supposed to be over, why, Sterne would argue, may it not be slipped in anywhere.

The scholar that most fascinated Sterne was Robert Burton, the Oxford recluse who wrote *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, "the only book", said Boswell of Dr. Johnson, "that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise". Once under the spell of the *Anatomy*, there is no release for any man, whether he be of the staid character of Johnson or of the shifting temper of Sterne. "I have lived", wrote its author, to compress an autobiographic passage, "a silent, sedentary, solitary, private life in the university, penned up most part in my study. Though by my profession a Divine, yet out of a running wit, an unconstant, unsettled mind, I had a great desire to have some smattering in all learning, to be *aliquis in omnibus, nullus in singulis*, to roam abroad, to have an oar in every man's boat, to taste of every dish, sip of every cup". An earlier selfhood he discovered in Democritus, the ancient Greek sage of Abdera, "a little wearish old man, very melancholy by nature", who passed his time in his garden, writing under a shady bower, or cutting up divers creatures "to find out the seat of this *atrabilis*, or melancholy, whence it proceeds, and how it is engendered in men's bodies; * * * saving that he sometimes would walk down to the haven and laugh heartily at such variety of ridiculous objects, which there he saw". Since the treatise of the Greek philosopher, if ever written, was no longer in existence, Burton took up the subject anew to the intent that he might cure himself and the world of a dreadful malady. "I writ of melancholy", he said, "by being busy to avoid melancholy." Through "partitions, sections, members, and subsections," entangled with medicine, law, morals, and divinity, he cut out his theme, strewing his course with thousands of quotations, ancient and modern, sometimes inserted in the text, sometimes printed on the margin, neatly paraphrased, or left untranslated, *per accidens* or as it might happen. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, with its curious wit and learning, was the most useful volume in Sterne's library.

If Sterne wished a Latin phrase to point a sentence, if he wished a good story, never stale if rightly retold, for an episode in *Tristram Shandy*, he had but to open Burton, and there it lay before him. Without scruple, he transferred to his own pages long stretches of the old book, with only such changes as genius can not help making when it takes from others.

Besides the *Anatomy*, Sterne read all sorts of books on physiology and medicine. His list of physicians, from whom he could quote directly or indirectly, begins with Hippocrates and comes down through Coglionissimo Borri, who “discovered in the cellulæ of the occipital parts of the cerebellum * * * the principal seat of the reasonable soul”, to Dr. James Mackenzie, who argued for the great effects “which the passions and affections of the mind have upon the digestion”. An extraordinary source of amusement to Sterne were treatises on midwifery, which was then just becoming a part of the regular practice of physicians. In these books and pamphlets one physician ridiculed and scolded another, holding up to contempt the instruments his opponent invented to bring children safely into the world, and sometimes interspersing his narrative with noisy disputes between the doctor and the midwife who was being displaced by the new science. Celebrated at the time was the angry altercation between Dr. John Burton of York and Dr. William Smellie of Glasgow. Burton’s books, now of great rarity, were worth owning even in Sterne’s day for their copperplates etched by George Stubbs, the horse-painter. With local as well as distant controversies, Sterne thus kept pace simply for the humour of it.

That Sterne should have also extracted humour out of mechanics and military engineering is the whim of his genius most akin to madness. True, memories of childhood carried him back to life in Irish barracks, but it is doubtful if he had ever seen a town fortified against a siege. His knowledge of the siege of Namur, for example, which plays so large a part in *Tristram Shandy*, was derived mostly from *The Life of William the Third, Late King of England*, an anonymous military biography that appeared the year after his Majesty’s

death. It may have been Sterne or it may have been Hall-Stevenson who purchased every book he came across on military science; but it was Sterne who perused them. These treatises on the art of war had an immense run in the century before Sterne, when military engineers brought to the construction of defences, and all that pertains thereto, the assistance of the newer mathematics, like Napier's *Logarithms* and Gunter's *Sines and Tangents*, which performed wonderful feats merely by addition and subtraction, without the help of multiplication and division. Just as with the old romances of chivalry, one Amadis begat another in an endless progeny down through Esplandian, Florisando, and Palmerin; so it was with the books on military engineering, which in one language or another spread throughout western Europe. Inasmuch as their elaborate calculations fill and occupy the mind beyond all other studies, the author of the *Anatomy* recommended them among the best antidotes against melancholy.

The way in which Sterne entered upon their track, losing himself soon in the mazes, is reflected, I dare say, in what is said of my uncle Toby's reading in *Tristram Shandy*. Most of the first year my uncle Toby pored over "Gobesius's military architecture and pyroballogy, translated from the Flemish"—presumably, Leonhard Gorecius's *Descriptio Belli Ivoniæ* (1578),—that he might discourse learnedly on the uses of artillery. After this close preliminary study, he was able to read rapidly the next year ten or twelve other crabbed authors, just as the schoolboy, after going through his first book in Latin, is supposed to proceed easily with the rest. To take them chronologically, first came Girolamo Cataneo, whose *Libro di Fortificare, Offendere e Diffendere* (1564) contains "brief tables to know readily how many ranks of footmen etc. go to making a just battle"; Agostino Ramelli, with *Le Diverse ed Artificiose Machine* (1588), descriptive of various contrivances for lifting heavy loads, constructing bridges, and hurling ignited grenades and other artificial fires; and the Florentine Lorini, who published a book on fortifications in 1609, and served with honour under the kings of France and Spain. So much for Italy. Then followed

Marolois, whose *Fortification ou Architecture Militaire* (1615) told Sterne how to attack and how to defend, with many mathematical details and more than a hundred plates, including one of Ostend prepared to endure the most protracted siege; the *Nouvelle Manière de Fortification* (1618) by means of sluices, written by Stevinus, a distinguished Dutch mathematician and engineer of the dykes, within whose book Yorick's sermon on conscience long lay concealed; *Les Fortifications* (1629) of the Chevalier de Ville, who attacked Artois under the eyes of Louis the Thirteenth, and was the first, it is said, to write upon the construction and effects of mines; the *Traité des Fortifications* (1645) by the Comte de Pagan, who conducted the sieges of Caen, Montauban, and Nancy, losing an eye and finally his sight completely in the service of his king; and François Blondel, who constructed great public buildings, arches of triumph, and published among other books *L'Art de jetter les Bombes* (1685). The long list for the second year closes with the *Nouvelle Manière de Fortifier les Places* (1702) by Baron Van Coehorn, the great Dutch engineer who fortified Namur—where my uncle Toby received his grievous wound,—and gallantly defended the citadel until, himself wounded and his regiment cut to pieces, he was obliged to capitulate to his still greater rival, Prestre de Vauban, afterwards Marshal of France. This was the Vauban who designed new fortifications for most of the cities of France and directed fifty sieges, winning town after town in the Netherlands, with Louis the Fourteenth often standing by, as at Namur, to witness the final blows that compelled the surrender. The methods by which Vauban built and by which he won, Sterne found explained in *De l'Attaque et de la Defense des Places* (1737-42).

Notwithstanding his reading in all these books, Sterne—if we may follow the hints from my uncle Toby—had not yet learned much about projectiles. For this knowledge he went to Tartaglia's *Quesiti ed Invenzioni Diverse* (1546), where he was met with the demonstration that a cannon-ball does not do its mischief by moving in a straight line. Having discovered the road along which a cannon-ball can not go, he set out to discover next the road in which it must go. His search

began with the *Pratique de la Guerre* (1650) of François Malthus, who gave precise directions for the use of artillery, bombs, and mortars; and the search ended with Galileo and Torricelli, whose infallible laws of the parabola he could not understand. There Sterne stopped, hopelessly bewildered. In the strange journey he had consulted now and then the *Acta Eruditorum*, a long and learned series of year-books in Latin, containing the latest discussions and discoveries in medicine, theology, and jurisprudence, as well as in mechanics and military architecture.

From this array of books, no one should infer that Sterne was a man of erudition. He probably could not follow a demonstration in mechanics involving the higher mathematics. It is, for example, noteworthy that he showed no interest in Stevinus's solution of the problem of the inclined plane, the achievement that gives the Dutch mathematician his place in the history of mechanics. As if ignorant of the brilliant discovery, Sterne referred to Stevinus as the inventor of "a sailing chariot * * * of wonderful contrivance and velocity", belonging to Prince Maurice, for a sight of which "the learned Peireskios * * * walked a matter of five-hundred miles". The truth seems to be that, while designing *Tristram Shandy* during the last years at Sutton, Sterne thumbed many old quartos and folios, amusing himself with maps, plates, and descriptions of sieges, to the end that my uncle Toby might be proficient in the phrases of military science. In that aim Sterne certainly succeeded; for he wrote, with the ease of an expert, of scarp and counter-scarp, counter-guard and demi-bastion, covered-way, glacis, ravelin and half-moon, on through saps, mines, and palisadoes.

The books that have been enumerated by no means comprise all that Sterne read at Sutton. They are rather only the curiosities; but as such they are the most significant, for they show wherein Sterne fed his humour. He continued to quote from the ancient classics, which he had read at school and college, as if they were still his companions. To describe his impatient moods he cited Hotspur when "pestered with a popinjay"; and the name which he bears in letters was taken from the jester whom Hamlet once knew. He read Lord

Rochester, Dryden, and others of the Restoration; and with the wits of the next half century he was still more familiar. Voltaire's *Candide*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and other notable books he read as they came out, or saw them in the stalls of York dealers. But it is unnecessary to proceed with these miscellanies, since here is already, in Dryden's phrase, God's plenty. As a divine, Sterne knew well the religious literature that was expected of him. It is a pleasure to discover in him traces of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* and of Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. For forming his style as a preacher he studied the sermons of Hall, Berkeley, Young, Tillotson, and other moralists and divines, from whom he drew liberally, sometimes merely paraphrasing the original when the harvest season, it may be, gave him scant time for independent composition. Nor should we forget the Scriptures which he read and re-read during the long winter evenings at Sutton, with the result that his style became saturated with the words and phrases of the English version. Many a clergyman since his time has run through indexes and concordances to the Bible in quest of "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb"; but the labour has been in vain, for the sentence, possessing the beauty and melody of inspiration, is Sterne's own recoinage of a crude proverb.

Along with his reading, Sterne played with his pen occasionally as well as with his pencil and his gun. Between the paragraph-writing for the newspapers and *Tristram Shandy*, lay several whims in verse and prose, including a satirical pamphlet which was duly printed at York. One of these minor pieces—a very pretty fancy cast in the form of a letter to a Mr. Cook,—after remaining in manuscript for more than a century, was published in 1870 by Paul Stapfer in his study of Sterne.* How the French critic came by it we will leave to his own strange narrative:

"Two years ago, a friend of mine in England, an M.A. of the University of Oxford and then Vice-Principal of Elizabeth College in the island of Guernsey, was visiting a lady of his acquaintance at York. Among other things the conversation turned to autographs; whereupon the lady said she had an

* *Laurence Sterne, sa Personne et ses Ouvrages* (Paris, 1870).

entire essay in the hand of Sterne, which had never been published; and she showed it to him. M. * * * * *, after examining it, said:

“ ‘I shall soon see a friend who is now at work on a study of Sterne; I am sure that he would be glad to have this piece; but I should not like to show it to him unless he may be permitted to copy and publish it.’ ‘*You shall have it,*’ replied the lady.

“I received the manuscript, copied and returned it. Some time afterwards I met the owner of it and naturally asked her how a precious manuscript like this came into her possession. The very vague information which she gave me in the course of the conversation left only the most confused impression on my mind. For this reason I intended later to ask her to write a short note upon the history of these sheets: but I learned that she was then so ill as to render impossible all correspondence. I was thus compelled to forego any exact knowledge of the matter, and even a second perusal of the manuscript which she had offered to place at my disposal again that I might make a facsimile of it.”

“We have then”, adds Stapfer in comment upon the story, “no external proof of the authenticity of the fragment. All we can say is that the hand, remarkably fair and firm, is identical with what we have already seen of Sterne’s; but there is no signature.”

It would be quite easy to set up an argument against accepting as Sterne’s this late discovery. Those who know Sterne only from *Tristram Shandy* may say that it hardly resembles anything in that book. Those who know Sterne a little better may say that it is only one among the scores of imitations and forgeries that followed in the wake of his popularity. And to everybody the tale told by the lady of York, so far as there is any, must seem a fabrication. But other manuscripts, Sterne’s beyond doubt, have drifted down in the same obscure ways; and the content of the one in question is in perfect harmony with an allegorical phase of mind through which Sterne was passing before he took up *Tristram Shandy*. In this case the allegory ends with a moral reflection, playfully supported by a line from Pope’s *Essay on Man*,

occurring in the first epistle near the passage which Sterne quoted in a letter to Miss Lumley, back in 1740. The spelling and abbreviations, as printed by Stapfer, correspond with Sterne's peculiar usage; an apt phrase recalls now and then his fine sense for style; and the background is Sutton without much doubt.

The interesting trifle—only half worked out—is a dream or meditation. The Vicar of Sutton had spent, I should say, an evening in his library over Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, in its day a famous book on the vast number of new worlds discovered or made probable by modern science. "A leaf on a tree growing in the garden", said Fontenelle, "is a little world inhabited by innumerable animalcules invisible to the naked eye, to whom it appears as an immense expanse with mountains and ravines. Those on one side have no intercourse with those who live on the other, any more than we have with men at the antipodes. Just so, it seems to me, the great planets moving through the immensity of space may be likewise inhabited with beings." The dwellers upon earth, moralised Sterne with reference to this passage, have commonly regarded themselves as the centre of the universe. "So considerable do they imagine themselves as doubtless to hold that all these numerous stars (our sun among the rest) were created with the only view of twinkling upon such of them, as have occasion to follow their cattle late at night." Whereas the truth seems to be that "we are situate on a kind of isthmus, which separates two Infinities", one revealed by the telescope and the other by the microscope. "On one side infinite Power and wisdom appear drawn at *full extent*; on the other, in *miniature*. The infinitely *strong and bold strokes there*, the infinitely *nice and delicate Touches here*, shew equally in both the divine hand."

His mind under the sway of these speculations, the vicar laid aside his book, strolled out into his orchard, and stopped near one of those plum trees which he had planted on first coming to Sutton. It was a brilliant summer night without a cloud. As he stood there, Fontenelle's myriad worlds were all about him. Far above were the moon and the countless

stars. By his side, on each green leaf of his plum trees were nations performing "actions as truly great as any we read of in the history of Alexander. Their courage, resolution, and patience of Pain may be as great as that exhibited by the Macedonian army, nay and even the prize of the contest no way inferior to that which animated the brave Greeks. The possession or conquest of the Leaf may gratify as many and as strong desires in them, as that of the earth in us".

Time and space, Sterne further reflected, are but relative notions depending upon the size and shape of the brain. To the beings that people the universe comprised within his plum tree, an hour or a minute may seem as long as four score and ten years to us. On the tricks that time and place may play with us, there came to Sterne's mind, "a very fine Spectator",* wherein is related a story of Mahomet from the Koran. "The angel Gabriel", according to Addison, "took Mahomet out of his bed one morning to give him a sight of all things in the seven heavens, in paradise, and in hell, which the prophet took a distinct view of; and after having held ninety thousand conferences with God, was brought back again to his bed. All this, says the Alcoran, was transacted in so small a space of time, that Mahomet at his return found his bed still warm, and took up an earthen pitcher, which was thrown down at the very instant that the angel Gabriel carried him away, before the water was all spilt."

At this point in his reverie, Sterne returned to the rectory and went to bed. "From that time", runs the narrative, "I knew not what happen'd to me, till by degrees I found myself in a new state of being, without any remembrance or suspicion that I had ever existed before, growing up gradually to reason and manhood, as I had done here. The world I was in was vast and commodious. The heavens were enlighten'd with abundance of smaller luminaries resembling stars, and one glaring one resembling the moon; but with this difference that they seem'd fix'd in the heavens, and had no apparent motion. There were also a set of Luminaries of a different nature, that gave a dimmer light. They were of various magnitudes, and appear'd in different forms. Some

* No. 94.

had the form of crescents; others, that shone opposite to the great light, appear'd round. We call'd them by a name, which in our language would sound like second stars. Besides these, there were several luminous streaks running across the heavens like our milky way; and many variable glimmerings like our north-lights." In his new world the dreamer passed several ages and then seemed to return to earth, where he was first rallied and then persecuted for his astronomical opinions. In process of time "began to be heard all over the world a huge noise and fragor in the skys, as if all nature was approaching to her dissolution. The stars seem'd to be torn from their orbits, and to wander at random thro' the heavens. * * * * all was consternation, horror, and amaze; no less was expected than an universal wreck of nature. What ensu'd I know not. All of a sudden, I knew not how, I found myself in bed, as just waking from a sound sleep. * * * * I hurri'd into the orchard, and by a sort of natural instinct made to the plumb-tree under which pass'd my last night's reverie. I observ'd the face of the heavens was just the same as it had appear'd to me immediately before I left my former state; and that a brisk gale of wind, which is common about sun rising, was abroad. I recollected a hint I had read in *Fontenelle* who intimates that there is reason to suppose that the *Blue* on *Plumbs* is no other than an immense number of living creatures. I got into the tree, examin'd the clusters of plumbs; found that they hung in the same position, and made the same appearance with the constellations of second stars, I had been so familiarly acquainted with, excepting that some few were wanting, which I myself had seen fall. I cou'd then no longer doubt how the matter was."

The world to which the dreamer had been transported by the angel Gabriel for some thousands of years was, it would seem, none other than the blue surface of a luscious plum growing on his favourite tree. The luminaries that shone about him like "second stars" were other plums dangling above him. The "luminous streaks running across the heavens like our milky way" were branches of the plum tree, and "the many variable glimmerings like our north-lights" were the leaves playing in the moonbeams. The damage to

Sterne's solar system had been caused by a wind that here and there sent a plum to the ground.

The dream is neatly rounded with a moral and a prophecy:

"O the vanity of worldly things, and even of worlds themselves! O world, wherein I have spent so many happy days! O the comforts, and enjoyments I am separated from; the acquaintance and friends I have left behind me there! O the mountains, rivers, rocks and plains, which ages had familiariz'd to my view! with you I seem'd at home; here I am like a banish'd man; every thing appears strange, wild and savage! O the projects I had form'd! the designs I had set on foot, the friendships I had cultivated! How has one blast of wind dash'd you to pieces! . . . But thus it is: *Plumbs* fall, and *Planets* shall perish

"'And now a Bubble burst, and now a world.' The time will come when the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and the stars shall fall like the fruit of a tree, when it is shaken by a mighty wind!"

Akin to this fancy addressed to Mr. Cook is a meditation in verse called *The Unknown* ☉, with the explanatory title written beneath: "Verses occasion'd by hearing a Pass-Bell", that is, the knell for the death of some parishioner at Sutton or some citizen of York. Sterne liked the poem so well that he took it away with him to Coxwold, where it was carefully guarded by his successors for a century; one of whom—the Reverend George Scott—permitted Thomas Gill of Easingwold to print it in his *Vallis Eboracensis* (1852), a book on the history and antiquities of the York valley. Spirited away from Coxwold, the manuscript is now possessed by a member of the Scott family. Though quite original in its details, the poem bears some analogies to the Emperor Hadrian's famous address to his departing soul as translated by Pope and afterwards elaborated by the poet in "the Dying Christian to his Soul". The abbreviations of the manuscript and the use of *y* for *th*, reproduced here, are a little puzzling at first sight; and quaint obscurity is lent to the diction by astronomical and other symbols which had come under Sterne's eye in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and perhaps in one of

Pope's minor satires. Taken in order, the symbols ☉, ☽, ☿, and ♃ stand for the world, God, heaven, and the soul:

Hark^e my gay Fr^d y^t solemn Toll
Speaks y^e departure of a soul;
'Tis gone, Y^{ts} all we know——not where
Or how y^e unbody'd soul do's fare——
In that mysterious ☉ none knows,
But ☽ alone to w^m it goes;
To whom departed souls return
To take th^{ir} Doom to smile or mourn.

Oh! by w^t glimm'ring light we view
The unknown ☉ we're hast'ning to!
God has lock'd up y^e mystic Page,
And curtain'd darkness round y^e stage!
Wise ☿ to render search perplex
Has drawn 'twixt y^s ☉ & y^e next
A dark impenetrable screen
All behind w^{ch} is yet unseen!
We talk of ☿, we talk of Hell,
But w^t yy* mean no tongue can tell!
Heaven is y^e realm where angels are
And Hell y^e chaos of despair.
But w^t y^{ese} awful truths imply,
None of us know before we die!
Wheth^{er} we will or no, we must
Take y^e succeeding ☉ on trust.

This hour perhaps or Fr^d is well,
Death-struck, y^e next he cries, Farewell!
I die! and y^{et} for ought we see,
Ceases at once to breath & be——
Th^s launch'd f^m life's ambiguous shore
Ingulph'd in Death appears no more,
Then undirected to repair,
To distant ☉^s we know not where.
Swift flies the ♃, perhaps 'tis gone
A thousand leagues beyond y^e sun;
Or 2^{ce} 10 thousand more 3^{ce} told

* They.

Ere y^e forsaken clay is cold!
 And yet who knows if Fr^{nds} we lov'd
 Tho' dead may be so far remov'd;
 Only y^e vail of flesh between,
 Perhaps yy watch us though unseen.
 Whilst we, y^{ir} loss lamenting, say,
 They're out of hearing far away;
 Guardians to us perhaps they're near
 Concealed in Vehicles of air,
 And yet no notices yy give
 Nor tell us where, nor how yy live;
 Tho' conscious whilst with us below,
 How much y^{ms*} desired to know.
 As if bound up by solemn Fate
 To keep y^e secret of y^{ir} state,
 To tell y^{ir} joys or pains to none,
 That man might live by Faith alone.
 Well, let my sovereign, if he please,
 Lock up his marvellous decrees;
 Why sh^d I wish him to reveal
 W^t he thinks proper to conceal?
 It is enough y^t I believe
 Heaven's bright^r yⁿ I can conceive;
 And he y^t makes it all his care
 To serve God here shall see him there!
 But oh! w^t ☉^s shall I survey
 The moment y^t I leave y^s clay?
 How sudden y^e surprize, how new!
 Let it, my God, be happy too.

The Unknown ☉ is but one of many poems that Sterne scribbled off for the entertainment of himself and his friends. On his annual visits to Skelton, it was his custom to recite cock-and-bull stories after the type of the one assigned to him in *Crazy Tales*. In collaboration with his host, he composed, it is said, on one of these occasions, the following classical inscription for the front of the reservoir which supplied Skelton Castle with water:

* Themselves.

“Leap from thy mossy cavern’d bed,
Hither thy prattling waters bring,
Blandusia’s Muse shall crown thy head,
And make thee to a sacred spring.”

In a quite different mood is the ode that Sterne inserted in *Tristram Shandy*, beginning “Harsh and untuneful are the notes of Love”, and suddenly breaking off in the second stanza with “O Julia!” But from these brief poems and numerous facetious and sentimental verses that once floated through newspapers and magazines as Sterne’s, one quickly returns to *The Unknown* ☉. This clever meditation, with its warning to “my gay friend”, and the flight of the soul to a region three score and ten thousand leagues beyond the sun before the clay which it left became cold, is the best that the Muse could do for Laurence Sterne.

CHAPTER VII

A GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT

1751-1759

WHEN Sterne wrote his meditations in verse and prose cannot be determined within narrow limits. A quotation from Pope's *Essay on Man* in the fragment addressed to Mr. Cook and another in a letter to Miss Lumley before she became Mrs. Sterne, may indicate a very early date, if the reader wishes to take the coincidence that way. But this and the other meditation may really belong to any year of the Sutton period. The point to be observed about them is that they give us a glimpse of Sterne exercising his pen in the moral and devotional themes of a great poet, rather apart from his prevailing mood; for he had not yet picked up the talent that lay nearest to him. Among his friends, as we have drawn his portrait at Stillington Hall and Skelton Castle, he was in no sense a moralist, but a parson who loved a jest above all else. During his last years at Sutton he belonged to a convivial club, composed of several clergymen and substantial citizens of York, who assembled o' nights at Sunton's Coffee-House in Coney Street, fast by the George Inn. Anecdotes were set afloat of what he said and did when chosen president of the evening, but they are too impalpable to find record here. As yet he had published nothing by which his wit could be judged. Now accident brought the occasion and he made the most of it.

Accident indeed brought the humourist into print; but in the incidents of his life previous to the event, one may see working a half-conscious plan. As early as the date of the quarrel with his uncle over political paragraphs in the newspapers, Sterne perhaps had a vague notion that he might some day write for himself; for while in the act of turning author, he announced to his friends, as the reason for it, that

he was tired of employing his brains for other people's advantage. Much of his curious reading also looks like special preparation for a literary career; but his farming was for years an encumbrance that impeded him greatly. Fortunately for literature, his land projects had issued in miserable failure. Some months before the awards were made to him under the Sutton Enclosure Act, he resolved to rid himself of unnecessary parish business—land, tithes, and the botheration of all taxes. So he informed, late in the autumn of 1758, the Rev. John Blake in a letter concluding with the paragraph:

“I thank God, I have settled most of my affairs—let my freehold to a promising tenant—have likewise this week let him the most considerable part of my tyths, and shall clear my hands and head of all county entanglements, having at present only ten pounds a year in land and seven pounds a year in Corn Tyth left undisposed of, which shall be quitted with all prudent speed. This will bring me and mine into a narrow compass, and make us, I hope, both rich and happy.”

And in memory of his sad experiences at Sutton, he wrote, six months before his death, to a certain Sir W—— who was planning to open marl beds upon his estate, to warn him against an undertaking sure to end in disaster. “I was once”, said Sterne in his humour, “such a puppy myself, as to pare, and burn, and had my labour for my pains, and two hundred pounds out of my pocket. Curse on farming (said I), I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. The following up of that affair (I mean farming) made me lose my temper, and a cart load of turnips was (I thought) very dear at two hundred pounds.

“In all your operations may your own good sense guide you—bought experience is the devil.—Adieu, adieu! —Believe me yours most truly, L. Sterne.”

While Sterne was interchanging letters with Blake about his farming, the weather, and parish business, it began to be noised about the coffee-houses that trouble was brewing among the clergy and officials of the cathedral; that the dean, to give a detail or two, had broken a solemn promise; that the dean and the archbishop were at the point of a complete

breach, etc. At the heels of these rumours, which were spread far beyond York by country gentlemen who had come in for the election, the quarrel broke forth into a warfare of pamphlets. For the first time since his appointment to Sutton, Sterne was then at full leisure. The contested election of the year was over, his oats were threshed, his barley had been sold to the maltman, and his farm and tithes had been leased to a neighbour for a series of years. As friend and champion of the dean, Sterne entered the broil with rare zest, bringing it to a close in a burst of ridicule and laughter.

The story of this quarrel, which terminated in Sterne's facetious *History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*, may be pieced together from the several pamphlets that were issued, the *York Courant*, and the local records of the time. Its beginnings go back to intrigues and dissensions immediately after the coming of Archbishop Hutton and Dean Fountayne. Some account of the fracas has been given in an earlier chapter; it now remains to add those details which concern Sterne and his first excursion into the literature of wit. The archbishop, said Sterne, "might have had his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *Humility*". The dean, an old college acquaintance of the humourist, was a colourless, good-natured ecclesiastic, inclined however to insist upon his prerogatives. Neither of these dignitaries resided in York. The archbishop's palace was then, as now, at Bishopthorpe, two or three miles out of the city; and the dean passed most of his time at Melton, his estate in South Yorkshire. Little differences that early sprang up between them were fomented by Dr. Francis Topham, the leading ecclesiastical lawyer at York. Dr. Topham, a year or so older than Sterne, "was descended from an ancient and honourable family of Yorkshire". Bred to the law, he graduated LL.B. from Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1734, and received from the same university the degree of LL.D. in 1739. Whether the two men met at Cambridge, it is not said; but they both settled at York in the same year or thereabouts, where Dr. Topham quickly established himself in the favour of those high in the Church. Any office, however small, he was ready to snap up for the increase of his income. He became in course

of time, though he did not yet enjoy all these positions, Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Pre-rogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, "Official to the Archdeacon of York, Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding, Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland, Official to the Precentor, Official to the Chancellor, and Official to several of the prebendaries". He was thus able to lay by, needless to add, a handsome fortune, destined to be squandered by a spendthrift son.

Never satisfied with the offices that he held, Dr. Topham was always manœuvring for more. In the course of a few weeks after Dean Fountayne came to York in the winter of 1747-48, one or more friends of the hungry lawyer recommended him to the dean as a person eminently qualified for any legal position that might fall directly within the dean's patronage or might be secured for him through the dean's vote and interest in the chapter. It was well known that Dr. Topham had his eye at this time on two ecclesiastico-legal offices that were sure to become vacant very soon; to wit, the Commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, which was in the dean's absolute gift, and the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter of York, in the disposition of which the dean's voice, as head of the chapter, was potent above all the rest. The two offices, valued respectively at six and twenty pounds a year, were then held by Dr. William Ward, who was in feeble health and likely to die at any moment. Subsequent to the application of his friends, Dr. Topham had a formal interview with Dr. Fountayne, which resulted in a general promise of the first office and of the dean's aid in obtaining the other. But Dr. Ward did not die so soon as was expected; and in the meantime the dean became less favourably impressed with Dr. Topham's character. A plan was devised whereby Dr. Ward should remain in nominal possession of the two commissaryships, while the fees should go to Dr. Mark Braithwaite, an advocate in the ecclesiastical court, a poor but estimable man, who felt unable to incur the legal expense incidental to the issue of new patents to the offices in question. To this arrangement Dr. Topham agreed with great reluctance and only, it was his

claim, on the assurance that the positions should fall to himself on the death of Dr. Braithwaite, who, though in fairly good health, was of a delicate constitution as well as somewhat advanced in age. The dean, however, did not understand it that way; he thought himself rid of Dr. Topham and all further solicitations from him or his friends. But he was unacquainted with the resources of the man he had to deal with. Dr. Topham, as the legal adviser to Archbishop Hutton, watched closely the conduct of the dean, and on every opportunity for creating friction between them, despatched mischievous messages to his client when in London or wherever else his Grace might be. In the autumn of 1748, a dispute arose over the appointment of preachers in the cathedral. The dean, it was averred, ordered the pulpit locked against a prebendary chosen for the day by the chancellor. The dispute lingered on through the following winter. As a reward for his able defence of the archbishop's rights on this and other occasions, Dr. Topham was appointed, on June 28, 1751, Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, the most comfortable office of all in the long list before enumerated.

In the meantime, so uncertain is human life, Dr. Braithwaite had died; and in June, 1751, the feeble Dr. Ward, who had strangely outlived him by nearly a year,* followed in his footsteps, leaving vacant the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter and that of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington. Dr. Topham made a grasp for both of them, notwithstanding the lucrative office he had just received. A majority of the chapter, he thought, were for his appointment to the first position. But the dean brought up the matter, it was alleged, when the lawyer's friends were absent, and threw his influence in favour of William Stables, Bachelor of Laws, who was easily elected on the first of August. Dr. Topham's charge that the chapter was made up against him was indeed true, for there were present on that day only his enemies—the dean, the canons residentiary—Charles Cowper and William Berdmore—and Laurence Sterne. In spite of this rebuff, Dr. Topham felt so certain of the second position that

* *York Courant*, August 21, 1750 and July 2, 1751.

he had the patent for it made out, with his name written in ready for the dean's seal. The dean however gave the one legal office then in his sole gift to his friend Laurence Sterne. The appointment, of which no record is discoverable, was probably made within a week or two after the election of William Stables to the other position.

Dr. Topham raised a loud clamour over this shameless betrayal of his hopes. It was everywhere given out by him and his friends that the dean had promised him two patents and had afterwards broken his word. This grave charge the dean let pass until he came to York again, a few months later, to preside over "a public Sessions Dinner" held at the residence of George Woodhouse, a wine-merchant of the parish of St. Michael-le-Belfrey. There were present the usual company of prebendaries and other officials of the chapter, Dr. Topham, and one or more country gentlemen. Knowing that an extraordinary scene might occur at the dinner, Sterne, always glad of a quarrel, rode in from Sutton. As soon as the plates were removed, the dean, turning to Sir Edmund Anderson of Kilnwick, openly accused Dr. Topham of spreading abroad false reports to the harm and discredit of the dean and chapter.

It is true, the dean admitted, that I once promised Dr. Topham my own Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington; but he subsequently renounced all claim to it in favour of Dr. Braithwaite. When it became vacant by the death of Dr. Braithwaite and Dr. Ward (in whose name the patent had remained), I looked upon myself as clearly and fully at liberty to dispose of it as I pleased, certainly without consulting Dr. Topham. As to the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter, it was not, as you all know, mine to give and I am not accustomed to promise what is not my own. Dr. Topham's affair is not with me but with the chapter in which my vote is only one among thirty.

After a general statement of facts in this tenor—though not in these words precisely, for we have only a few phrases to go by,—the dean faced Dr. Topham and demanded an explanation of his conduct. "Dr. Topham", to quote Sterne's attested account of what took place, "at first disowned his

being the Author of such a Story to the Dean's Disadvantage; but being pressed by Mr. *Sterne*, then present, with an undeniable Proof, That he, Dr. *Topham*, did propagate the said Story, Dr. *Topham* did, at last, acknowledge it; adding, as his Reason or Excuse for so doing, That he apprehended (or words to that Effect) he had a Promise, under the Dean's own Hand, of the *Dean and Chapter's Commissaryship*." The dean then called upon "Dr. *Topham* to produce the Letter in which such pretended Promise was made". Dr. *Topham* replied that he had not brought the letter with him, or something like that. Whereupon the dean read to the company a letter that Dr. *Topham* had written to him while at Cambridge for his Doctor's degree in June, 1751, requesting the two commissaryships in succession to Dr. Ward. Then he took from his pocket and read a copy of his own curt reply, dated at Cambridge, July 2, 1751, in which the application was ignored or merely alluded to in the postscript: "I hope very soon to see you at York." Both letters were acknowledged as genuine by the crestfallen lawyer.

Only a little imagination is necessary on the part of the reader to construct out of this legal phraseology a hot encounter, as Mr. *Sterne* and the dean one after the other rise to their feet, shaking forefinger or fist over Dr. *Topham* and proving him a scoundrel. The way in which they silenced their enemy redounds, it must be admitted, not so much to their sense of justice as to their skill and adroitness. Three years before this, the dean had certainly promised the lawyer his own patent and his aid in obtaining the one in the joint gift of himself and the chapter. He had simply changed his mind. Dr. *Topham*, publicly set down a liar, kept quiet for several years, so far as there is any record of it; but he was only waiting for a good opportunity to return to the attack. In the spring of 1757, Archbishop Hutton was appointed to the see of Canterbury. His successor at York was Dr. John Gilbert, for some years Bishop of Salisbury. At best a man of mediocre talent and character, the new archbishop counted for little in the diocese of York, owing to the many physical infirmities that were coming upon him. He lan-

guished rather than lived at Bishopthorpe. Dr. Topham was a frequent visitor at the palace, making it his "Business to inquire after every Place and Remedy that might help his Grace in his Complaints". When the archbishop was too ill to see him, the interviews and correspondence were carried on between Dr. Topham and the archbishop's daughter, who acted as secretary and adviser to her father in diocesan and other matters. On first meeting the new archbishop, Dr. Topham told him "That he would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to live upon good Terms with his Dean and Chapter", for they were "A Set of *strange* People". The archbishop was however assured by Dr. Topham that it was his policy on all questions of dispute to espouse "the Interests of the See of York, in Opposition to those of the Deanery". The foundations were thus carefully laid for a fresh quarrel, which first arose from a trivial incident.

In September, 1757, the archbishop issued, on the advice of Dr. Topham, a mandate for the *immediate* induction of the archbishop's brother into a prebend to which he had been appointed. This was an unusual proceeding, inasmuch as a delay of three days was customary between the reception of a mandate and an induction. But the case was urgent. The sick archbishop had just had a serious relapse when for the moment his life was despaired of; and should he die before the installation of his prebendary, the title, it was pointed out, would instantly accrue to the Crown. The chancellor of the diocese, after consulting with the residentiaries, decided to let the induction take the ordinary course. The dean, though he could have known nothing of the incident at the time, being absent at Melton, was nevertheless held responsible for "the dilatory *Capitular Forms* and Ceremonies of the Church of *York*". Another point of dispute was over leases. Dr. Topham set up the claim that when the archbishop sends a lease to the dean and chapter, "the *Seal* of the *Corporation* ought to be put to it, upon its receiving the Assent and *Consent* of a *Majority* of the Body Corporate", by the general proxy which the dean was accustomed to leave with the chapter for unimportant matters. On the other hand, it was the dean's opinion that the seal ought not to be put to a lease

without "a special proxy" from himself. Dr. Topham called the dean's attention to the statute of the thirty-third year of Henry the Eighth against this and other favourite negative powers of deans. The dean replied that he had never regarded a special proxy as quite essential in the case of leases, but that Dr. Topham had always insisted upon one whenever his own interests were involved.

It was not the intent of Dr. Topham, if we read him aright, to force these differences to a breach between the dean and the archbishop. He was simply ingratiating himself into special favour at the palace, that the archbishop might be kindly disposed to a new and questionable scheme on which his heart was now set. Back in 1751 the lawyer had been blessed by the birth of a son, that Edward Topham, playwright and libertine, who lived to bring into fashion short scarlet coats, short white waistcoats, and long leather breeches reaching well upwards to the chin, at a time when everybody had been wearing very long coats, very long waistcoats, but breeches very short in the waist, and thus very troublesome to aldermen and all other modest men of conspicuous rotundity. "Through life it was a feather in my friend Topham's cap", said Frederic Reynolds, a brother dramatist, "that when a boy, he was the unconscious founder of Sterne's literary career."* For his son, already at his accidence, the fond father wisd to make handsome provision. On searching into the records of the dean and chapter, he discovered that the patent of the Commissary of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts—his best paying office—had formerly been granted and enjoyed for two lives instead of for one life, as was then the custom. He naturally wished a revival of the good old times. So he went to the archbishop in the summer of 1758, and asked him for permission to open his patent of the office, which read for one life only, and "to add the Life of *another proper Person* to it", meaning thereby, as it quickly transpired, the name of his own son.

The archbishop at first readily assented to the plan, out of gratitude to the lawyer for his many services; but in the

* *The Life and Times of Frederic Reynolds written by himself*, II, 190 *et seq.* (London, 1826).

course of the next few weeks, he began to have doubts about the wisdom of the proposal. The transaction could not be completed, as Dr. Topham well knew, without the concurrence of the dean and chapter, which was, under the circumstances, quite difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, despite the archbishop's wishes. It is unnecessary to go far into the intrigues and flatteries now practised by Dr. Topham to win the friendship of the men whom he had grossly offended. Very amusing, indeed, is a letter that he sent over to Melton, by Mr. John Clough, registrar of the dean and chapter, to urge the dean, as friend and well-wisher, to act favourably in the matter of the patent at once before his elevation to a more exalted station. "As I have", said the message, "very lately had a *private Intimation* of the Bishop of Winchester having just had some very alarming Symptoms, I must expect to be *able soon to congratulate* you on your being added to the Bench of Bishops." The dean sent back the following cooling-card:*

"Melton, Aug. 14, 1758.

"Sir,

"I received your letter by Mr. *Clough*, and shall take the first opportunity to examine the Registers in our Office relating to the Patents of the Commissary, and also to consult my Brethren at *York*, upon the Affair you mention.

"I flatter myself that the Archbishop will not doubt of my Readiness to comply with any Request his Grace may make to me, being confident that he would not ask me to lend a helping Hand for the depriving his Successors of any of their customary Privileges of the Archbishoprick."

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient

"humble Servant,

"J. FOUNTAYNE."

That the question might be settled once for all, the dean, Dr. Topham, and several others were summoned to meet at Bishopthorpe on the seventh of November for a general con-

* This letter and all details of the sessions dinner are given in *An Answer to a Letter addressed to the Dean of York in the Name of Dr. Topham* (York, 1758).

ference. The two chief dignitaries, who had been misrepresented, each to each, by the intriguing lawyer, found themselves agreeably of one opinion; that it was inadvisable, notwithstanding ancient precedent, to grant the valuable patent for more than one life. The lawyer, enraged at this decision, says Sterne, "huffed and bounced most terribly", threatening everybody from the archbishop down to a timid surgeon, one Isaac Newton, who gave the story of the conference to the coffee-houses. Nothing coming of these angry violences, Dr. Topham decided to appeal to the public against the dean, whom he charged with working upon the sick man at Bishopthorpe. So during the second week in December was launched his anonymous pamphlet entitled *A LETTER Address'd to the Reverend the DEAN of York; In which is given A full Detail of some very extraordinary Behaviour of his, in relation to his Denial of a Promise made by him to Dr. TOPHAM*. Though the sixpenny pamphlet set about to deal principally with the commissaryship that fell to Sterne, it nevertheless touched upon all the bickerings of a dozen years. Two weeks later, the dean had ready his retort courteous, which bore the title: *An ANSWER To A LETTER Address'd to the DEAN of YORK, In the NAME of Dr. TOPHAM*. A feature of this very skilful reply was a formal declaration (from which we have quoted), signed by Laurence Sterne and other justices of the peace, as to what took place at the Sessions Dinner at Mr. Woodhouse's. Had he desired, the Vicar of Sutton could not well have kept out of the controversy, for, as Dr. Topham had put it, Sterne's appointment to the courts of Pickering and Pocklington first brought the quarrel to a head. In concluding his open letter, the dean announced that he had taken leave of Dr. Topham "once for all". Thus apparently sure of the last word, the lawyer poured forth the phials of his wrath in *A REPLY TO THE ANSWER TO A LETTER Lately addressed to the DEAN OF YORK*. With considerable humour "a late notable Performance", supposed to be the dean's, was described as "the Child and Offspring of many Parents". Mr. Sterne and some others, it was intimated, had been called

in by the dean for "Correcting, Revising, Ornamenting, and Embellishing" his well-known faint and nerveless style.

The attestation and a phrase here and there in the dean's pamphlet were without doubt Sterne's; but they count for nothing in comparison with what Sterne now did. In his retreat at Sutton he had been at work during the last week on his own reply to Dr. Topham. Late in January, 1759, just after Dr. Topham's second pamphlet reached the coffee-houses, Sterne had printed, ready for distribution, *A Political Romance, Addressed TO ———, Esq; OF YORK. To which is subjoined a KEY*:—better known among the humourist's works as *A History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*. As indicative of his aim, which was ridicule rather than satire or controversy, the title-page bore the motto from Horace:

"Ridiculum acri

Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat Res."

The first edition of the *Political Romance* is so exceeding rare that all who have written on Sterne have doubted its being printed during the author's life-time. It was laid by in Sterne's desk, say Mr. Percy Fitzgerald and Mr. Sidney Lee, and at most circulated only in manuscript. This, we now know, was not the case. A copy strayed up to London, where it was reprinted in part in 1769, the year after Sterne's death, by a bookseller in the Strand. The obscure printer corrected the humourist's English, substituting elegant phrases for quaint and homely idioms, and cut away the *Key* and two long letters that go with it—in all, just one half of the romance as originally written and published at York early in 1759. It is this mutilated version only that has been known to readers and biographers of Sterne. Fortunately, however, a copy of the first edition found its way, a half century or more ago, into the splendid collection of Edward Hailstone, Esq., of Horton Hall, Bradford, England, who lent it to Robert Davies, the antiquary, while preparing his *Memoir of the York Press* (1868). On the death of Mr. Hailstone in 1890, it passed with many valuable books and manuscripts to the library of the dean and chapter at York, where it was uncovered in September, 1905. A few

weeks afterwards another copy was found in a volume of pamphlets at the York Subscription Library. Still another copy, bound with the previous tracts in the controversy, has long rested, it now turns out, in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. No other copies are known to exist.

Sterne cast his narrative into the form of an allegory, which becomes easy and delectable when we know the incidents underlying it. To the end that seeming great things might appear as small as they really were, the diocese of York was cut down to a country parish, and the archbishop thereby reduced to the rank of a village parson. The dean, shorn of his surname, became merely John the parish clerk; and the cathedral chapter figured as the church wardens. Incidentally Mark Braithwaite appeared as Mark Slender, and William Stables as William Doe. Dr. Topham, renamed Trim, because he received so thorough a trimming at the last, was degraded to sexton and dog-whipper of the parish; and Sterne himself was slightly disguised under the name of Lorry Slim.

The late parson and John the parish clerk, says the tale, had just got snugly settled in the parish, when Trim “put it into the Parson’s Head, ‘That *John’s* Desk in the Church was, at the least, four Inches higher than it should be:—That the Thing gave Offence, and was indecorous, inasmuch as it approach’d too near upon a Level with the Parson’s Desk itself.’ This Hardship the Parson complained of loudly, —and told *John* one Day after Prayers,—‘He could bear it no longer:—And would have it alter’d and brought down as it should be.’ *John* made no other Reply, but, ‘That the Desk was not of his raising:—That ’twas not one Hair Breadth higher than he found it;—and that as he found it, so would he leave it.’ ”

This stiff dispute, shadowing forth in allegory the quarrel between Archbishop Hutton and Dr. Fountayne over the key to the cathedral pulpit, was “Trim’s harvest”. For a few days later John saw Trim emerging from the vicarage and “strutting across the Church-yard, y’elad in a good creditable cast Coat, large Hat and Wig, which the Parson had just given him.—‘Ho! Ho! Hollo! *John!*’ cries *Trim*, in an

insolent Bravo, as loud as ever he could bawl——‘See here, my Lad! how fine I am.’——‘The more Shame for you,’ answered *John*, seriously.—‘Do you think, *Trim*,’ says he, ‘such Finery, gain’d by such Services, becomes you, or can wear well?’ ”

This was Sterne’s way of saying that Dr. Topham had secured the patent of the Prerogative Courts of York.

“A snapper-up of unconsidered trifles” to deck himself out with, Trim had also been trying for some time to coax from John a pair of black plush breeches “not much the worse for wearing”. He “begged for God’s Sake to have them bestowed upon him when *John* should think fit to cast them”. John told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself for creating such a racket in the village about “an old-worn-out-Pair-of-cast-Breeches, not worth Half a Crown”. “In the first Place”, said he in allusion to Dr. Topham’s many comfortable places, “are you not Sexton and Dog-Whipper, worth Three Pounds a Year?——Then you begg’d the Church-Wardens to let your Wife have the Washing and Darning of the Surplice and Church-Linen, which brings you in Thirteen Shillings and Four pence.——Then you have Six Shillings and Eight Pence for oiling and winding up the Clock, both paid you at *Easter*.——The Pindar’s Place which is worth Forty-Shillings a Year,——you have got that too.——You are the Bailiff, which the late Parson got you, which brings you in Forty Shillings more.——Besides all this, you have Six Pounds a Year, paid you Quarterly for being Mole-Catcher to the Parish.”

The cast-breeches—Pickering and Pocklington—after covering the thin legs of Mark Slender for a time, eventually fell to “*Lorry Slim*, an unlucky Wight, by whom they are still worn;——in Truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this Time;——But *Lorry* has a light Heart; and what recommends them to him is this, that, as thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will to the contrary, still envies the *Possessor* of them,——and with all his Pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*.”

Though Trim had thus missed the plush breeches, he yet “had an Eye to, and firmly expected in his own Mind, the

great Green Pulpit-Cloth and old Velvet Cushion [the Commissaryship of the Dean and Chapter], which were that very Year to be taken down;—which, by the Bye, could he have wheedled *John* a second time out of 'em, as he hoped, he had made up the Loss of his Breeches Seven-fold. Now, you must know, this Pulpit-Cloth and Cushion were not in *John's* Gift, but in the Church-Wardens, &c.—However, as I said above, that *John* was a leading Man in the Parish, *Trim* knew he could help him to them if he would:—But *John* had got a Surfeit of him;—so, when the Pulpit-Cloth, &c. were taken down, they were immediately given (*John* having a great Say in it) to *William Doe*, who understood very well what Use to make of them.”

After the old garments and worn pulpit decorations had been thus divided up—William Doe, Trim, and Lorry Slim each getting one or more pieces,—the parish fell back into its usual monotonous drone for some ten years, and would have droned on forever, had not the old parson left his flock for a better living and his place been supplied by a new incumbent, that is, by Dr. Gilbert. Then was struck up a lively tune. Trim at once hastened to the rectory, that is, to Bishopthorpe, to sell himself into servitude. Within a year, “he had”, it was his boast, “black'd the Parson's Shoes without Count, and greased his Boots above fifty Times; * * * he had run for Eggs into the Town upon all Occasions;—whetted the Knives at all Hours:—caught his Horse and rubbed him down, * * * never came to the House, but ask'd his Man kindly how he did. * * * When his Reverence cut his finger in paring an Apple, he went half a Mile to ask a cunning Woman, what was good to stanch Blood, and actually returned with a Cobweb in his breeches Pocket.”

For these services Trim demanded nothing but “an old *watch-coat* that had hung up many years in the church”, apparently of use to nobody. But Trim had set his heart upon it, humbly asking for it: “Nothing would serve *Trim* but he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm Under-Petticoat* for his Wife, and a *Jerkin* for himself, against Winter; which, in a plaintive Tone, he most humbly begg'd his Reverence would consent to. * * * No

sooner did the distinct Words—*Petticoat*—*poor Wife*—*warm*—*Winter* strike upon his [the parson's] Ear,—but his Heart warmed, and, before *Trim* had well got to the End of his Petition, (being a Gentleman of a frank and open Temper) he told him he was welcome to it, with all his Heart and Soul. 'But, *Trim*', says he, 'as you see I am but just got down to my Living, and am an utter Stranger to all Parish-Matters * * * and therefore cannot be a Judge whether 'tis fit for such a Purpose; or, if it is, in Truth, know not whether 'tis mine to bestow upon you or not;—you must have a Week or ten Days Patience, till I can make some Inquiries about it;—and, if I find it is in my Power, I tell you again, Man, your Wife is heartily welcome to an Under-Petticoat out of it, and you to a Jerkin, was the Thing as good again as you represent it.' "

Several days after this conversation, the parson, while turning the leaves of the parish registry in his study, came upon a memorandum about the watch-coat that opened his eyes as to its dignity and value. "The great Watch-Coat", he discovered, "was purchased and given above two hundred years ago, by the Lord of the Manor, to this Parish-Church, to the sole Use and Behoof of the poor Sextons thereof, and their Successors, for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold Nights, in ringing Complines, Passing-Bells, &c which the said Lord of the Manor had done in Piety, to keep the poor Wretches warm, and for the Good of his own Soul, for which they were directed to pray, &c &c &c. '*Just Heaven!*' said the Parson to himself, looking upwards, '*What an Escape have I had! Give this for an Under-Petticoat to Trim's Wife! I would not have consented to such a Dese-cration to be Primate of all England; nay, I would not have disturb'd a single Button of it for half my Tythes!*'

"Scarce were the Words out of his Mouth, when in pops *Trim* with the whole Subject of the Exclamation under both his Arms.—I say, under both his Arms;—for he had actually got it ripp'd and cut out ready, his own Jerkin under one Arm, and the Petticoat under the other, in order to be carried to the Taylor to be made up,—and had just stepp'd in, in high Spirits, to shew the Parson how cleverly it had

held out.” The parson, enraged at Trim’s impudence, ordered him “in a stern Voice, to lay the Bundles down upon the Table,—to go about his Business, and wait upon him, at his Peril, the next Morning at Eleven precisely: Against this Hour like a wise Man, the Parson had sent to desire *John* the Parish-Clerk, who bore an exceeding good Character as a Man of Truth. * * * Him he sends for, with the Church-Wardens, and one of the Sides-Men, a grave, knowing, old Man, to be present:—For as *Trim* had with-held the whole Truth from the Parson, touching the Watch-Coat, he thought it probable he would as certainly do the same Thing to others”. The next morning at eleven, passions ran high at the rectory. Trim pleaded the Parson’s promise, and, failing there, enumerated his humble services as the parson’s man. But all in vain. The “pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous Fellow * * * was kick’d out of Doors; and told, at his Peril, never to come there again”.

To the allegory which thus relates how Dr. Topham finally met with signal disaster at Bishopthorpe, in his attempt to cut up and make over for his son the patent of the Prerogative Courts of York, Sterne subjoined an amusing postscript on the numerous hands, including his own, that the church-lawyer uncovered in the dean’s pamphlet. They were all, said Sterne, as imaginary as the nineteen men in buckram with whom Jack Falstaff fought at Gad’s Hill. Then came a gay tail-piece, which the printer wished to put on the title-page, representing two game cocks, in full trim, beak to beak, ready to strike.

Not able to stop here, though the story was really over, Sterne appended to his allegory a humorous *Key* and two letters, which cover, in the whole, as many pages as the entire previous narrative. The *Key*, it might be observed, was developed from Swift’s “Grand Committee” that sat upon the meaning of *A Tale of a Tub*. Since this part of the romance, as aforesaid, has been seen by few men, and by none of Sterne’s biographers, it may be quite worth while to give some account of it, if for no other reason than this. But the continuation brings with it, as will be apparent at once, some interesting facts about its author.

“This *Romance*”, says the *Key*, which is of course no key, “was, by some Mischance or other, dropp’d in the *Minster-Yard, York*, and pick’d up by a Member of a small Political Club in that City; where it was carried, and publickly read to the Members the last Club Night.

“It was instantly agreed to, by a great Majority, That it was a *Political Romance*; but concerning what State or Potentate, could not so easily be settled amongst them.

“The President of the Night, who is thought to be as clear and quick-sighted as any one of the whole Club in Things of this Nature, discovered plainly, That the Disturbances therein set forth, related to those on the *Continent*:—That *Trim* could be Nobody but the King of *France*, by whose shifting and intriguing Behaviour, all *Europe* was set together by the Ears:—That *Trim’s* Wife was certainly the *Empress*, who are as kind together, says he, as any Man and Wife can be for their Lives.—The more Shame for ’em, says an Alderman, low to himself.—Agreeable to this Key, continues the President,—The *Parson*, who I think is a most excellent Character,—is His Most Excellent Majesty King *George*;—*John*, the Parish-Clerk, is the King of *Prussia*; who, by the Manner of his first entering Saxony, shew’d the World most evidently,—That he did know how to lead out the Psalm, and in Tune and Time too, notwithstanding *Trim’s* vile Insult upon him in that Particular. * * * The *Old-cast-Pair-of-Black-Plush-Breeches* must be *Saxony*, which the *Elector*, you see, *has left off wearing*:—And as for the *Great Watch-Coat*, which, you know, covers all, it signifies all *Europe*; comprehending, at least, so many of its different States and Dominions, as we have any Concern with in the present War.

“I protest, says a Gentleman who sat next but one to the President, and who, it seems, was the Parson of the Parish, a Member not only of the Political, but also of a Musical Club in the next Street;—I protest, says he, if this explanation is right, which I think it is,—That the whole makes a very fine Symbol.—You have always some Musical Instrument or other in your Head, I think, says the Alderman.—Musical Instrument! replies the Parson, in Astonishment,—

Mr. Alderman, I mean an Allegory; and I think the greedy Disposition of *Trim* and his Wife, in ripping the *Great Watch-Coat*, to Pieces in order to convert it into a Petticoat for the one, and a Jerkin for the other, is one of the most beautiful of the Kind I ever met with; and will shew all the World what have been the true Views and Intentions of the Houses of *Bourbon* and *Austria* in this abominable Coalition.”

This hypothesis of the president, so ably supported by the parson, met at first with a good deal of favour; but before the evening was far advanced, one hardheaded member after another began to ask questions, and then to suggest other explanations of the *Romance* until the president was made to tremble for his own hypothesis. “Every Man turn’d the Story to what was swimming uppermost in his Brain;—so that, before all was over, there were full as many Satyres spun out of it,—and as great a Variety of Personages, Opinions, Transactions, and Truths, found to lay hid under the dark Veil of its Allegory, as ever were discovered in the thrice-renowned History of the Acts of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*.”

A gentleman at the opposite side of the table, who knew nothing of the flirtations between France and Austria, but “had come piping-hot from reading the History of King *William’s* and Queen *Anne’s* Wars, * * * acquainted them, That the dividing the *Great Watch-Coat* did, and could allude to nothing else in the World but the *Partition Treaty*; which, by the Bye, he told them, was the most unhappy and scandalous Transaction in all King *William’s* Life: It was that false Step, and that only, says he, rising from his Chair, and striking his Hand upon the Table with great Violence; it was that false Step, says he knitting his Brows and throwing his Pipe down upon the Ground, that has laid the Foundation of all the Disturbances and Sorrows we feel and lament at this very Hour.”

The debate, after many a wild-goose chase, was concluded by a gentleman of the law who had been sitting quietly by the fire. “He got up,—and, advancing towards the Table, told them, That the Error they had all gone upon thus far, in making out the several Facts in the *Romance*,—was in

looking too high. * * * He then took the *Romance* in his Left Hand, and pointing with the Fore-Finger of his Right towards the second Page, he humbly begg'd Leave to observe, (and, to do him Justice, he did it in somewhat of a *forensic Air*) That the *Parson, John*, and *Sexton*, shewed incontestably the Thing to be *Tripartite*; now, if you will take Notice, Gentlemen, says he, these several Persons, who are Parties to this Instrument, are merely Ecclesiastical. * * * It appears very plain to me, That the *Romance*, neither directly nor indirectly, goes upon Temporal, but altogether upon Church-Matters.—And do not you think, says he, softening his Voice a little, and addressing himself to the Parson with a forced Smile,—Do not you think Doctor, says he, That the Dispute in the *Romance* between the *Parson* of the Parish and *John*, about the Height of *John's* Desk, is a very fine Panegyrick upon the *Humility of Church-Men?*”

The parson, nettled by this insult to the cloth, made a repartee on “the glorious Prolixity of the Law”, which “highly tickled” an apothecary in the company, “who had paid the Attorney, the same Afternoon, a Demand of Three Pounds Six Shillings and Eight-Pence” for a lease and release. “He rubb'd his Hands together most fervently,—and laugh'd most triumphantly” at the parson's clever hit. The lawyer, understanding the real cause of the apothecary's jocular humour, turned to him, and “dropping his Voice a Third” said:

“You might well have spared this immoderate Mirth, since you and your Profession have the least Reason to triumph here of any of us.—I beg, quoth he, that you would reflect a Moment upon the *Cob-Web* which *Trim* went so far for, and brought back with an Air of so much Importance in his Breeches Pocket, to lay upon the Parson's cut Finger.—This said Cob-Web, Sir, is a fine-spun Satyre, upon the flimsy Nature of one Half of the Shop-Medicines, with which you make a Property of the Sick, the Ignorant, and the Unsuspecting.”

Stung by this discourteous retort, the apothecary, a surgeon, a chemist, an undertaker, and another apothecary, “were all five rising up together from their Chairs, with full

Intent of Heart, as it was thought, to return the *Reproof Valiant* thereupon.—But the President, fearing it would end in a general Engagement, he instantly call'd out, *To Order*''; and thus saved a squabble. As soon as quiet was restored, it was ordered that the *Romance* and the minutes of the meeting likewise, as a key to the allegory, be printed at once and under one cover. A whitesmith, who had remained silent up to this time, objected to the publication of the *Key* on the ground that it was not one Key but “a whole Bunch of Keys”. “Let me tell you, Mr. President, says he, That the *Right Key*, if it could but be found, would be worth the whole Bunch put together.”

The key that the whitesmith longed for has been placed in the reader's hand bright and clean; but the key to the *Key*, so to speak, though it may be recovered, is now eaten out by the rust of time. The transactions of the “political club” by the Minster Yard, were, so far as we may surely go, a burlesque of the evenings Sterne passed with his convivial club that met at Sunton's Coffee-House in Coney Street. Under the disguise of a surgeon, lawyer, apothecary, undertaker, and the president who loved an hypothesis better than his life, he drew little portraits of the members—their mannerisms and favourite gestures, and their vehemence in canvassing local and larger politics of the day. What kind of men they were further than this or what names they bore—we may never know, except, to be sure, that the Vicar of Sutton is among them. He is the parson of the parish, smart in repartee and ready to defend by a counter-jest an attack upon the cloth that he wears, just as was related in the old story of the puppy. There is, besides, that apt reference to Rabelais, which shows what was running in Sterne's head; and finally the gentleman who, like my uncle Toby, spent his days and nights in reading of the wars of King William and Queen Anne.

According to the fiction which the author adopted, the romance was read to the club and then sent to the printer. The fiction, more likely than not, is the truth. Sterne may have read the pamphlet to this company of friends, and then placed the manuscript in the hands of one of them to watch it safely

through the press of Cæsar Ward, editor and publisher of the *York Courant*, whose shop was nearby in the same street. To a real or imaginary gentleman of York, who was to look after the printing, Sterne sent in from Sutton precise directions, which were made a part of the pamphlet, following next after the *Key*. The letter, which runs thus, is a curious piece of humour:

“Sir,

“You write me Word that the Letter I wrote to you, and now stiled *The Political Romance* is printing; and that, as it was drop’d by Carelessness, to make some Amends, you will overlook the Printing of it yourself, and take Care to see that it comes right into the World.

“I was just going to return you Thanks, and to beg, withal, you would take Care That the Child be not laid at my Door.—But having, this Moment, perused the *Reply* to the *Dean of York’s Answer*,—it has made me alter my Mind in that respect; so that, instead of making you the Request I intended, I do here desire That the Child be filiated upon me, *Laurence Sterne*, Prebendary of *York*, &c. &c. And I do, accordingly, own it for my own true and lawful Offspring.

“My Reason for this is plain;—for as, you see, the *Writer* of that *Reply*, has taken upon him to invade this *incontested Right* of another Man’s in a Thing of this Kind, it is high Time for every Man to look to his own—Since, upon the *same Grounds*, and with half the Degree of Anger, that he affirms the Production of that very Reverend Gentleman’s to be the Child of many Fathers, some one in his Spight (for I am not without my Friends of that Stamp) may run headlong into the other Extream, and swear, That mine had no Father at all:—And therefore, to make use of *Bay’s* Plea in the *Rehearsal*, for *Prince Pretty-Man*; I merely do it, as he says, ‘for fear it should be said to be no Body’s Child at all.’

“I have only to add two Things:—First, That, at your Peril, you do not presume to alter or transpose one Word, nor rectify one false Spelling, nor so much as add or diminish

one Comma or Tittle, in or to my *Romance*: For if you do, —In case any of the Descendents of *Curl* should think fit to invade my Copy-Right, and print it over again in my Teeth, I may not be able, in a Court of Justice, to swear strictly to my own Child, after you had *so large a Share* in the begetting it.

“In the next Place, I do not approve of your *quaint Conceit* at the Foot of the Title Page of my *Romance*.—It would only set People on smiling a Page or two before I give them Leave;—and besides, all Attempts either at Wit or Humour, in that Place, are a Forestalling of what slender Entertainment of those Kinds are prepared within: Therefore I would have it stand thus:

“YORK:

“Printed in the Year 1759.

“(Price One Shilling.)

“I know you will tell me, That it is set too high; and as a Proof, you will say, That this last *Reply* to the *Dean's Answer* does consist of near as many Pages as mine; and yet is all sold for Six-pence.—But mine, my dear Friend, is quite a *different Story*:—It is a Web wrought out of my own Brain, of twice the Fineness of this which he has spun out of his; and besides, I maintain it, it is of a more curious Pattern, and could not be afforded at the Price that his is sold at, by any *honest Workman* in *Great-Britain*.

“Moreover, Sir, you do not consider, That the writer is interested in his *Story*, and that it is his Business to set it a-going at *any Price*: And indeed, from the Information of Persons conversant in Paper and Print, I have very good Reason to believe, if he should sell every Pamphlet of them, he would inevitably be a *Great Loser* by it. This I believe verily, and am,

“Dear Sir,

“*Your obliged Friend*

“Sutton on the Forest,
Jan. 20, 1759.

“*and humble Servant,*

“LAURENCE STERNE.”

Having thus thrown off the mask of anonymity already

worn thin, Sterne closed the whole performance with a signed letter to Dr. Topham, bearing the same date as the one just quoted. The lawyer, in his last pamphlet, had questioned the accuracy of Sterne's memory about the Sessions Dinner, and hinted that the Vicar of Sutton had had a good deal to do with the dean's previous pamphlet, as if Dr. Fountayne, without the aid of friends, were not quite equal to a controversy. Sterne took up in detail these and other points, assuring Dr. Topham that he had nothing to do with the dean's *Answer* beyond the attestation which he signed with others, and that his memory was still good. "As for the many coarse and unchristian Insinuations", said Sterne to Dr. Topham, "scatter'd throughout your *Reply*,—as it is my Duty to beg God to forgive you, so I do from my Heart: Believe me, Dr. *Topham*, they hurt yourself more than the Person they are aimed at; And when the *first Transport* of Rage is a little over, they will grieve you more too. And for the little that remains unanswered in yours,—I believe I could, in another half Hour, set it right in the Eyes of the World:—But this is not my Business.—And if it is thought worth the while, which I hope it never will, I know no one more able to do it than the very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman whom you have so unhandsomely insulted upon that Score."

After this pretty compliment to the dean, Sterne added a postscript, which is, in conventional phrase, the best part of the letter:

"I beg Pardon for *clapping* this upon the *Back* of the *Romance*,—which is done out of no Disrespect to you.—But the *Vehicle* stood ready at the Door,—and as I was to pay the whole Fare, and there was Room enough behind it,—it was the cheapest and readiest Conveyance I could think of."

At the end of all came the archangel Gabriel, as an appropriate design, resting upon a bank of clouds and blowing the last trumpet.

"Above five hundred copies" of the pamphlet, it was said, "were struck off"; and "what all the serious arguments in the world could not effect, this brought about." At once

Sterne had at his feet both friends and enemies, begging that the *Romance* be suppressed. Dr. Topham sent word that he was ready, on this condition, to "quit his pretensions". Certain members of the York chapter told Sterne that this humorous recital of their disputes would never do. The archbishop and the dean were, to say truth, each handsomely complimented by the way; but the laugh was, after all, on them as well as on Dr. Topham; the publication, from any point of view was, they thought, offensive to the dignity of the Church. Sterne heeded the advice of his brethren. With his assent an official of the cathedral bought up the copies remaining in the book-stalls, and burned them with those still at the printer's. That was the current story thirty years after. But several copies must have been sold beyond recovery; and Sterne himself managed in some way to keep from the flames "three or four" other copies which he guarded for the delight of his friends.*

* For statements in this paragraph, see *Whitefoord Papers*, 229; *London Chronicle*, May 3-6, 1760.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PUBLICATION OF TRISTRAM SHANDY— VOLUMES I AND II

JANUARY 1759—MAY 1760

THE burning of the *Political Romance* was a dramatic incident that “contributed”, according to the newspapers of the next year, “more to raise the reputation of Parson Yorick, than any thing he could have published. * * * Ten times more was said about this piece than it deserved, because it was burnt; and the general voice, which never reports without exaggeration, * * * cried it up as one of the most perfect and excellent things human invention ever had produced”. To Sterne the miscarriage of his first literary effort was a keen disappointment, for “till he had finished his *Watchcoat*, he hardly knew that he could write at all, much less with humour so as to make his reader laugh”. Having once discovered his talent, the country parson, then in his forty-sixth year, gave himself up to the exercise and delight of it for the rest of his life. *Tristram Shandy* was begun—so the book itself says by indication—late in January, 1759, immediately after the mishap to the *Political Romance*. Sterne wrote as fast as he “possibly could”, reaching the eighteenth chapter by the ninth of March, six weeks and some odd days after first setting out. By the twenty-sixth of the same month, he was well on in the twenty-first chapter; and by June, the first draft of two volumes was completed. His genius bore him on so easily and rapidly through the later stages that he felt it was in him to write two more volumes every year so long as he should live.

There were however times of doubt and depression. To say truth, *Tristram Shandy* came near going the way of the *Political Romance*. While the book was in making, Sterne took some of the loose sheets over to Stillington Hall, where

he read them to Stephen Croft and a group of friends brought together for the purpose after dinner. Some of the company "fell asleep", said the brother of the squire, "at which Sterne was so nettled that he threw the Manuscript into the fire, and had not luckily Mr. Croft rescued the scorched papers from the flames, the work wou'd have been consigned to oblivion". As soon as the copy was fully written out, Sterne consulted various friends at York about it. One of them, who may stand for several, said: "I took the Liberty to point out some gross Allusions which I apprehended would be Matter of just Offense, and especially when coming from a Clergyman, as they would betray a Forgetfulness of his Character." In reply Sterne "observed, that an Attention to his Character would damp his Fire and check the Flow of his Humour, and that if he went on, and hoped to be read, he must not look at his Band or his Cassock". Marmaduke Fothergill of York, the younger of that name, whom Sterne described as "my best of critics and well-wishers", kept iterating: "Get your preferment first, Lorry, and then write and welcome." "But suppose", replied Sterne, "preferment is long o'coming—and, for aught I know, I may not be preferred till the resurrection of the just—and am all that time in labour, how must I bear my pains." Against the cautions of another he cited the name of a great predecessor, saying: I * * * deny I have gone as far as Swift: he keeps a due distance from Rabelais; I keep a due distance from him. Swift has said five hundred things I durst not say, unless I was Dean of St. Patricks." Finally, to ease his "mind of all trouble upon the topic of discretion", Sterne decided to appeal to Archbishop Gilbert, should his Grace come down to York in the autumn. Whether or not the archbishop read and approved, the author does not say.

When the book was ready for the press, as Sterne thought, in June, he offered it to the local booksellers; but "they wou'd not have anything to say to it, nor wou'd they offer any price for it". He then tried the Dodsleys, the great London publishers in Pall Mall. From the correspondence, of which only one letter is extant, it appears that in June Sterne wrote to one of the Dodsleys, Robert it would seem,

offering him *Tristram Shandy* for fifty pounds. Dodsley wrote back "that it was too much to risk on a single volume, which if it did not sell, would be hard upon his brother". By this time Sterne was beginning to heed the strictures that were passed upon his manuscript. Besides the caution of his clerical brethren that he should consider the solemn colour of his coat, to which a meditation upon death would be "a more suitable trimming", some objections were made to his aim and style. "To sport too much with your wit, or the game that wit has pointed out", a nameless friend remarked to him, "is surfeiting; like toying with a man's mistress, it may be very delightful solacement to the inamorata, but little to the by-stander". Though Sterne said in reply, "I have burnt more wit than I have published," he nevertheless promised to avoid the fault that was pointed out to him, so far as he could without spoiling his book. To the same critic, the mischance that befell Dr. Slop while approaching Shandy Hall on a dark night seemed too minutely described. Sterne defended himself by an appeal to the manner of Cervantes, but finally brought himself to admit: "Perhaps this is overloaded, and I can ease it." All who saw the manuscript knew of course that Dr. Slop was a satire upon Dr. John Burton; and there are indications that several did not approve of the attack. As a result of these criticisms, Sterne carefully revised his manuscript during the summer, pruning and grafting. In June he had enough material, said one who claims to have passed a whole night with him over his papers, to fill "four volumes", instead of the two that were eventually published.

Besides cutting away many passages—a half may be an exaggeration—Sterne added, according to his own account, "about a hundred and fifty pages", and took "all locality" out of the book; that is, he removed here and there a sting from the local satire. Thus amended, *Tristram Shandy* met with great favour. By October, "a strong interest [was] formed and forming in its behalf"; and the next month rumour among his friends as far away as London, had it that Mr. Sterne was "busy writing an extraordinary book". Among the gentlemen at York who liked *Tristram Shandy*

because it made them laugh, was “a bachelor of a liberal turn of mind” named Lee, who came forward early in the autumn and promised Sterne “one hundred pounds towards the printing”. Fortified by this substantial sum, Sterne submitted new proposals to Dodsley, asking for his aid in placing *Tristram Shandy* before the public. The letter to Dodsley, bearing no date but belonging to October or thereabouts, runs in part as follows:

“I propose * * * to print a lean edition, in two small volumes, of the size of *Rasselas*, and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set upon the remaining volumes, from the reception of these. If my book sells and has the run our critics expect, I propose to free myself of all future troubles of this kind, and bargain with you, if possible, for the rest as they come out, which will be every six months. If my book fails of success, the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr. Hinxman [John Hinxman, a York bookseller] sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop, upon the usual terms in these cases. The book shall be printed here, and the impression sent up to you; for as I live at York, and shall correct every proof myself, it shall go perfect into the world, and be printed in so creditable a way as to paper, type, &c., as to do no dishonour to you, who, I know, never chuse to print a book meanly. Will you patronize my book upon these terms, and be as kind a friend to it as if you had bought the copyright?”

In a postscript Sterne added at the end: “I had desired Mr. Hinxman to write the purport of this to you by this post, but least he should omit it, or not sufficiently explain my intention, I thought best to trouble you with a letter myself.”

The arrangements for publication outlined in this letter were afterwards somewhat modified, but just how can not be determined beyond doubt, inasmuch as the succeeding correspondence between Sterne, Hinxman, and Dodsley is irretrievably lost. According to John Croft, Dodsley now

offered Sterne forty pounds for the copyright* on conditions which the author was unwilling to accept. Be that as it may, by December, 1759, Sterne's perplexities over his book were at an end, and he was anxiously awaiting his fame. In its issue of January 1, 1760, the *London Chronicle* had the following announcement:

This Day was published,
Printed on a superfine Writing Paper, and a new
Letter, in two Volumes, Price 5s. neatly bound,

The LIFE and OPINIONS of
TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gent.

York, printed for and sold by John Hinxman
(Successor to the late Mr. Hildyard) Bookseller in
Stonegate: J. Dodsley in Pallmall and M. Cooper in
Pater-noster-row, London: and by all the Booksellers.

Whether this first instalment of *Tristram Shandy* was really printed at York or at London is a question in dispute among bibliographers. Sterne's design, as may be seen from the letter to Dodsley in October, was to place his book in the hands of a local printer, most likely Ann Ward, widow and successor of Cæsar Ward, at the Sign of the Bible in Coney Street, "with whose neat and accurate typography", says Robert Davies, the antiquary, "the author was well acquainted". John Croft, in agreement with others, who ought to have known, also says that the first edition, running to "about two hundred copies", was "first printed at York", and adds that Sterne sent a set of them up to Dodsley, who "returned for an answer that they were not saleable". Against these assertions the bibliographical evidence is nearly if not quite conclusive. All copies of the first edition in two volumes (so far as they have been inspected by the present writer or described by others at first hand) contain on the title-page the title: "The Life and Opinions of Tristram

* Neither this nor later instalments of *Tristram Shandy* were entered at Stationers' Hall, though we find Sterne subsequently disposing of his copyrights.

Shandy, Gentleman," a Greek quotation from the *Encheiridion** of Epictetus, the number of the volume, and the date "1760". There is nothing more; no place of issue, no name of publisher, no name of author. It is the same for all copies extant, so far as they are known: for those now in accessible private collections and for the copy—presumably an advance copy—which Sterne presented to his physician, Dr. John Dealtry of York.† The notion which still half obtains that there was an earlier private edition of *Tristram Shandy*, perhaps bearing on the title-page "York, 1759", is erroneous. The paper and the typography of the first edition of the first two volumes are precisely the same as those of the third and fourth volumes, which were printed in London the next year for R. and J. Dodsley. It is of course possible, though not probable, that Dodsley, in bringing out the second instalment of the book, exactly matched the paper and the type of the York printer; but the natural inference is that Dodsley, on terms not now known, likewise printed the first edition of the first instalment; that he kept with reluctance a bundle for the London market, and sent the rest down to York, to John Hinxman, who may be regarded as the real publisher of *Tristram Shandy*, in so far as it had any outside of the author and his friend Mr. Lee. The book was quietly placed on sale at York, without any advertisement in the local newspaper until February 12, 1760.

It was a current story that Sterne set about and continued *Tristram Shandy* as a relief to melancholy. "Every sentence", it was said, "had been conceived and written under the greatest Heaviness of Heart". Certain it is that the composition of his book was accompanied by domestic troubles that might have crushed a man of grave temperament, but they affected the light-hearted Yorick little if at all. The last reference in Sterne's correspondence to his mother occurs in a letter to John Blake in the autumn of 1758. He was coming in to York, he said, and wished to see his mother. A "Mrs. Sterne", most likely this unfortunate woman, who may have been housed in "the common gaol at York" for a

**Εγχειρίδιον*, c. 5.

† This copy is described in the *Athenæum*, February 23, 1878.

time before the reconciliation with her son, was buried from the church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey on May 5, 1759. It was the church where her son had preached a charity sermon many years before on the joy and rapture of the ancient Hebrew woman when the prophet Elijah placed in her arms her child, a moment before dead but now alive. His "proud and opulent" uncle Jaques Sterne, of many titles and many preferments, likewise died on the ninth of the following June, and was buried in the parish church at Rise. He left no children. Though the quarrel between uncle and nephew still remained abroach, Laurence yet expected a legacy. But just before death, Dr. Sterne, hitherto uncertain about the disposition of his property, willed all of his "real and personal estate whatsoever" to his housekeeper, Sarah Benson, widow, of the parish of St. Michael-le-Belfrey.* Disappointed of his reasonable expectations, Laurence "was so offended that he did not putt on mourning tho' he had it ready, and on the contrary shewed all possible marks of disrespect to his Uncle's memory".

The sentimental marriage with Miss Lumley had proved, as might have been foretold, uncomfortable to both parties. "Sterne and his Wife", said John Croft, in gathering up local anecdotes, " * * * did not *gee* well together, for she used to say herself, that the largest House in England cou'd not contain them both, on account of their Turmoils and Disputes." Perhaps it was after one of these warm scenes that Sterne sent his Latin epistle, from which we have already quoted, over to Hall-Stevenson about a projected trip to London. He was sitting at the time in Sunton's Coffee-House on the eve of departure, undisturbed by the loud conversation around him, as he began recklessly: "*Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus et aegrotus de meâ uxore plus quam unquam—et sum possessus cum diabolo qui pellet me in urbem.*" Over against this letter with its disagreeable inferences may be placed the rather pretty domestic scenes of 1758, when the parson and his wife, as described in the Blake correspondence, were frequently taking a wheel together into

* The will was proved in the Prerogative Court of York on June 13, 1759.

York for their winter purchases and visits to friends. But sometime in 1759, affairs reached a crisis, owing, rumour had it, to Sterne's misconduct. His wife, suddenly stricken with palsy, "went out of her senses", and "fancied herself the Queen of Bohemia". Her husband, falling in with the whim of her delusion, "treated her as such, with all the supposed respect due to a crowned head". "In order to induce her to take the air", it was said further, "he proposed coursing in the way practised in Bohemia. For that purpose he procured bladders and filled them with beans and tied them to the wheels of a single horse-chair, when he drove madam into a stubble field. With the motion of the carriage and the bladders' rattle it alarmed the hares and the greyhounds were ready to take them."* The sad condition of Mrs. Sterne affected the health of little Lydia, who had been ailing for some time, throwing the "poor child into a fever". On the approach of winter, Sterne took a small house in the Minster Yard at York for his wife and daughter, that the one might have the best medical attendance, and the other "begin dancing" and be put to school. Of Lydia, he said: "If I cannot leave her a fortune, I will at least give her an education."

Regardful as was Sterne for the comfort of his family, the illness of his wife nevertheless sat lightly upon him. While she was living by the minster, perhaps under the care of "a lunatic doctor", the unsteady parson consoled himself by carrying on a flirtation with Miss Catherine Fourmantelle, a professional singer, then in lodgings with her mother at Mrs. Joliffe's, close by in Stonegate. The Fourmantelles belonged to a family of French Protestants who fled to England for refuge in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. "They styled themselves", said John Murray, the London publisher, who informed himself in the matter, "Beranger de Fourmantel, and possessed estates in St. Domingo, of which they were deprived by the measures consequent on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. An elder sister, it appears, conformed to the Church of Rome, returned to Paris, and was reinstated in the family property."† The younger sister,

* John Croft, *Scrapeana*, 22, (second ed., York, 1792).

† Murray's preface to Sterne's letters to Miss Fourmantelle as originally published in *Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society*, II (London, 1855-56).

Catherine, a woman of much beauty and good character as well as birth, endeavoured to support herself and mother by her voice. She came to York, apparently in the autumn of 1759, under an engagement to perform through the winter of 1759-60 at the annual subscription concerts held in the Assembly Rooms. On the evening of November 29, for example, a day of thanksgiving throughout Great Britain for Admiral Hawke's victory over the French, the event was celebrated at York by a concert of vocal and instrumental music in which "Miss Fourmantel" took part with "the best voices in town". She again sang at the Assembly Rooms on the last day of the year and enjoyed during the ball that followed her performance a *tête-à-tête* with Yorick over his "witty smart book". At his dictation, she wrote of him the next day to an acquaintance in London: "You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attach'd to me in this part of the World, where I came a stranger." Near the close of her engagement, there was a concert for her benefit at the Assembly Rooms, for which she thanked "the Ladies and Gentlemen who honour'd her with their Presence".* The progress of the sentimental intrigue is recorded in a series of brief notes that Sterne sent to Miss Fourmantele during her stay at York. In the first of them, Sterne was not quite certain how his advances would be received, for he wrote:

"Miss, —— I shall be out of all humour with you, and besides will not paint your Picture in black, which best becomes you, unless you accept of a few Bottles of Calcavillo, which I have ordered my Man to leave at the Dore in my Absence;——the Reason of this trifling Present, you shall know on Tuesday night, and I half insist upon it, that you invent some plausible Excuse to be home by 7.—Yrs. Yorick."

Miss Fourmantele was evidently glad of the delicious wine and the assurance that she should have her portrait, if all went well on the next Tuesday evening. The sweet Calcavillo was succeeded by "a pot of sweetmeats" and "a pot of honey", though Miss Fourmantele was "sweeter than all the flowers it came from", and, most strangely, by a copy

* *York Courant*, Feb. 5 and 19, 1760. The benefit was on Feb. 15.

of Sterne's first printed sermon, along with the following letter:

"My Dear Kitty,—I Beg you will accept of the inclosed Sermon, which I do not make you a present of merely because it was wrote by myself, but because there is a beautiful Character in it, of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given of Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the Prophet's, which has attach'd me so much to you and your Interests that I shall live and dye your affectionate and faithful Laurence Sterne.

"P. S.—If possible I will see you this afternoon, before I go to Mr. Fothergils. Adieu, dear Friend! I had the pleasure to drink your health last night."

The intimacy grew until it became at last "My dear, dear, Kitty", and "I love you to distraction * * * and will love you to eternity."

This open flirtation—for the two met and conversed publicly at the Assembly Rooms and at the houses of mutual friends, and went shopping together at the mercer's—seems to have caused little or no scandal in easy-going York. Before *Tristram Shandy* went to press, Sterne touched upon the episode here and there in his book, wherein "dear, dear Kitty" becomes "dear, dear Jenny", wife, mistress, or child, whichever of the three the reader wills. The relation was, however, if Sterne's word is to be taken for it, "but that tender and delicious sentiment, which ever mixes in friendship, where there is a difference in sex".

Tristram Shandy, coming out at this time, made its way rapidly. Writing for Sterne from York to her friend in London on January 1, 1760, Miss Fourmantelle said: "There are two Volumes just published here, which have made a great noise and have had a prodigious run; for, in two days after they came out, the Bookseller sold two hundred, and continues selling them very fast." *Tristram Shandy* was for York, first of all, a local book, in a measure like the *Political Romance*, but moving through a larger and less perilous series of portraits than that afforded by religious

controversy. The author had, to be sure, "altered and new dressed" the first draft for the removal of "all locality"; but it could not have been changed in its prime essentials. Indeed it is hinted in the book itself that a key might be prepared to certain passages and incidents which have "a private interpretation". As many times related, Sterne depicted himself as prebendary and rural parson in the indiscreet and outspoken Yorick who scattered his "gibes and his jests about him", never thinking that they would be remembered against him. Other characteristics of Sterne came out in Mr. Tristram Shandy, the name by which he first chose to be known in letters, and most appropriately, for *shan* or *shandy* is still a dialectical word in parts of Yorkshire for gay, unsteady, or crack-brained. It is of course really Sterne who speaks when Mr. Tristram Shandy says, after complaining of his asthma: "I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune; and though I will not wrong her by saying, She has ever made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil;—yet with all the good temper in the world, I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small HERO sustained."

The elder Shandys, father and uncle, were obviously less specialised portraits, being the compound of many observations and memories reaching back to boyhood, when Laurie and his mother followed the poor ensign's regiment from barrack to barrack. A claim was put forward in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July, 1873, that my uncle Toby had an original in "a certain Captain Hinde" of Preston Castle, Berkshire. Sterne, it is said, made frequent visits to this "old soldier and country gentleman, * * * eccentric—full of military habits and recollections—simple-hearted, benevolent, and tenderly kind to the dumb creatures of the earth and air". There may be something in this persisting tradition, but the main hobby of my uncle Toby was evidently a hit at Sterne's friend—of uncertain name—in the *Key to the Political Romance*, who, with mind filled with the exploits of Marlborough, insisted on interpreting the incidents of the church

quarrel in the terms of King William's wars. Mr. Walter Shandy also belongs, in one or more of his characteristics, to that convivial company which met at Sunton's Coffee-House. He was a further development of the president of the evening, who set forth his hypothesis as soon as the members were assembled, and fought for it stubbornly to the last ditch, preferring death to surrender. Yorkshire likewise knew that Eugenius, who plays the part of good counsellor to Yorick, meant John Hall-Stevenson, and people must have relished the absurdity.

To Dr. Topham, Sterne merely alluded by the way, under the name of Didius, the great church-lawyer, who had "a particular turn for taking to pieces, and new framing over again, all kinds of instruments" in order to insert his legal "wham-wham". Him he reserved for future instalments of his book, shifting his satire in the meantime to Dr. John Burton, renamed Dr. Slop, Papist and man-midwife. No one could doubt who was intended by "the little, squat, uncourtly figure * * * waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebræ of a little diminutive pony" out to Shandy Hall to try his newly invented forceps upon the head of Mr. Tristram Shandy. To add to the gaiety of it all, Dr. Burton, wofully lacking in a sense of humour, solemnly disclaimed all resemblance to the caricature Sterne had drawn of him. Then another doctor of the neighbourhood, thinking that Sterne might have meant him, called the parson up early one morning and entered vigorous protest against the "indecent liberties taken with him". After vain attempts to persuade the doctor of his error, Sterne, concludes the story, lost patience, and remarked sharply as his visitor was going: "Sir, I have not hurt you; but take care: I am not born yet; but heaven knows what I may do in the two next volumes."

Amid the stir over *Tristram Shandy* at home, Sterne was looking towards London. "I wrote", he said, "not to be *fed* but to be *famous*." York might purchase the book for its local allusions, jests, and ridicule of a well-known "scientific operator" seen on the streets every day; but in London it would be judged on its wider merits, if it had any, quite apart from personalities. Could *Tristram Shandy* stand that

test? To all appearance it was a mad performance not much like anything that had ever come from the press. No wonder Dodsley hesitated and perhaps refused to become its sponsor. It is a novel, people would say, in which nothing happens, in which everything is topsy-turvy, with a dedication, a mock epistle at that, in the seventh chapter, and a sermon on conscience at the end,—to pass over without comment an impossible marriage-settlement, stars and long dashes, and an entire page smutched with printer's ink. It is called the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; but the gentleman is only an embryo. It turns out to be the life and opinions of the father and uncle of Tristram Shandy; and why not call it so? That would be the publisher's point of view; and in truth not much could be said for the book on a cursory perusal.

But a reader at leisure could not fail to see that there might be method in Sterne's madness: that every part of the book, every episode, every digression, whim, aside, or innuendo, was perhaps carefully premeditated, and the whole organised on a plan which the author was keeping a half secret. As the Greek motto on the title-page announced to all who could read it, the book dealt not with adventures and men in action, but with men and their opinions. Sterne knew that character may be revealed quite as well by what men say as by what they do. If you know what a man really thinks on a variety of subjects, there is nothing left to know about him; for you have got his heart and his brain. As if in burlesque of petty details of childhood prevalent in current fiction, Sterne set out with the conception and prenatal history of his hero, bringing to bear on the ludicrous theme quaint and musty speculations of medical writers over the animal spirits and the nature, endowments, and rights of the *homunculus*. After merely stating *when* Tristram was born, he proceeded to explain *how*, but stopping to describe the preliminaries, he did not advance beyond them. Mention of the midwife of the parish led Sterne on to the parson's wife who set her up in business, and to parson Yorick himself, who could not be dropped without a full portrait, for he was so singular in his habits, humours, friendships, and death.

That done, it was necessary to give some account of the hero's father and mother—of Mr. Walter Shandy, a Turkey merchant, who gained a competency in trade, and then retired from London to Shandy Hall to pass the rest of his days there with a dull and good-natured wife.

Naturally of an “acute and quick sensibility”, the “little rubs and vexations” incident to the marriage state made the squire rather peevish towards others, though it was “a drollish and witty kind of peevishness”. He was indeed so “frank and generous” in his heart that his friends never took offence at the “little ebullitions of this subacid humour”. They rather enjoyed and relished it. Having nothing to do, Mr. Shandy spent his time on the old books that had been collected by his ancestors. In the course of his reading he fell in with the logicians and minute philosophers, from whom was derived the notion that there is something sacred about an hypothesis, as a means of arriving at truth, especially about a favourite one of his own making. “He was”, says Sterne, “systematical, and, like all systematick reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature, to support his hypothesis.” It was his opinion “That there was a strange kind of magick bias, which good or bad names, as he called them, irresistibly impressed upon our characters and conduct. * * * How many CAESARS and POMPEYS, he would say, by mere inspiration of the names, have been rendered worthy of them? And how many, he would add, are there, who might have done exceeding well in the world, had not their characters and spirits been totally depressed and NICODEMUS'D into nothing?”

It was quite right that the Yorkshire squire should have a foil in his brother, my uncle Toby, unlike him in temperament and all else, save a crack in the brain that bespoke them of the same Shandy blood. As a boy, my uncle Toby read *Guy of Warwick*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, and all the romances of war and adventure he could find in his father's library or purchase with stray pence from the pedlar of chap-books. A young man, he enlisted in King William's army, and after years of honourable service, received an

embarrassing wound in the groin at the siege of Namur. Sent home, he retired to a neat house of his own near Shandy Hall, and by the aid of Corporal Trim, set up on the bowling green in the rear of the house-garden, fortifications with “batteries, saps, ditches, and palisadoes”, by means of which, with the assistance of maps and books on military science, he followed Marlborough’s army on the Continent, demolishing town after town in imitation of the great captain. War, which brutalises most men, developed in my uncle Toby all the finer instincts of human nature. He was of a peaceful, placid nature—“no jarring element in it,—all was mixed up so kindly within him; my uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.

“—Go—says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown one which had buzzed about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time,—and which after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him;—I’ll not hurt thee, says my uncle *Toby*, rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand.—I’ll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape; go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?—This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.”

These two brothers and the corporal, Sterne brought together in the back parlour of Shandy Hall on an evening while the parish midwife was above stairs with Mrs. Shandy. Then entered Dr. Slop, the celebrated *accoucheur*, fresh from disaster on the road, who was brain-cracked like the rest. At once began, to end only with Trim’s recital of the sermon, the mad clash of opinions, accompanied by the most brilliant wit, irony, and mockery. Safe to say there had been nothing comparable to the performance since the days of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Not that Sterne really imitated Shakespeare anywhere; but he thoroughly understood Shakespeare’s fools, and created anew a rare company of them. Then he set them at their wild play.

In describing *Tristram Shandy*, I have done not much more than paraphrase with free hand what was said of it within a few months of its publication. The honour of writ-

ing the first printed account of the book belongs to one of that company of literary hacks, who, with Ralph Griffiths at their head, presided over the *Monthly Review*, which issued at the end of every month from the sign of the Dunciad in the Strand. The men on this magazine were all so dull, said Dr. Johnson, that they were compelled to read the books which they undertook to review. The scribbler to whom *Tristram Shandy* was assigned for December, 1759, prepared a long and faithful appreciation, patched with striking excerpts, and mild censure of the style as too much in the manner of Swift, and closing with a cordial recommendation of Mr. Tristram Shandy to the reader, "as a writer infinitely more ingenious and entertaining than any of the present race of novelists." Next came a paragraph of general praise in the *Critical Review* for January, 1760, managed by a society of smart gentlemen whom Smollett had brought together and trained, if I may quote the great lexicographer once more, to review books without ever reading them. The *London Magazine* followed in February with a high-flown apostrophe, beginning "Oh rare Tristram Shandy!—Thou very sensible — humorous — pathetick — humane — unaccountable!——what shall we call thee?——Rabelais, Cervantes, What? * * * If thou publishest fifty volumes, all abounding with the profitable and pleasant like these, we will venture to say thou wilt be read and admir'd." By this time the sketch of Parson Yorick, evidently the author himself, said the reviewers, was circulating through the newspapers, with blind conjecture as to who he might really be in the flesh.

During these months of suspense, Sterne was staying at York that he might be near his wife and Miss Fourmantelle. Thus far he could have discovered nothing very unusual in the course his book was taking, though the reviews were rather more favourable than might have been anticipated of so wild a performance. Spice was now added to its reception by a letter from a London physician of his acquaintance, who took him to task for writing a book which could not "be put into the hands of any woman of character", and for alluding under a gross Rabelaisian name, to a senile infirmity—"a droll foible", Sterne called it—of the late Dr. Richard Mead,

one of the most distinguished physicians of the age. The unknown physician* intimated that he was protesting not for himself alone but with the assent of Dr. Mead's sons-in-law—Sir Edward Wilmot and Dr. Frank Nicholls, physician to his Majesty George the Second. After waiting four days for his humours to cool, Sterne sent back a gay reply in repudiation of the text that had been thrust upon him by his correspondent: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. "I declare", averred Sterne of the text: "I have considered the wisdom and foundation of it over and over again, as dispassionately and charitably as a good Christian can, and, after all, I can find nothing in it, or make more of it, than a nonsensical lullaby of some nurse, put into Latin by some pedant, to be chanted by some hypocrite to the end of the world, for the consolation of departing lechers." The letter further contained an adroit defence of his conduct on all points and a casual statement of his serious aim to do the world good by ridiculing what he thought "of disservice to sound learning", wherever it might be uncovered. His age certainly needed the correction which it received from him, but of that it is not here to speak. Out of this hot correspondence, of which nothing is left save Sterne's one reply, came the news, just as Sterne would have it, that while *Tristram Shandy* was causing "a terrible fermentation" among London prudes and Sangrados, Garrick had read, admired, and passed the book on to his friends.

II

With Garrick, the regulator of public taste, for its sponsor, the success of *Tristram Shandy* might well seem assured. Garrick's world, as Sterne knew, comprised the whole world of fashion. What cared Sterne for anybody else? Fine ladies and fine gentlemen who were bored by books, would read, he was aware, anything to which Garrick gave the cue. London was as eager to see Sterne as Sterne was to see London. The story which I have now to tell, much

* In *Original Letters of Laurence Sterne*, 88 (London 1788), the physician is referred to as "Doctor L——." Perhaps he may be identified with Dr. Thomas Lawrence, physician to Dr. Johnson, and for a time an associate of Dr. Nicholls.

of it in the words of John Croft's reminiscences and Sterne's own letters to friends at home, reads like romance rather than sober history. The visit to London came about by mere accident. On a morning of the first week in March, Stephen Croft, John's brother, rode in from Stillington for the York coach up to London. Meeting Sterne on the street, he offered to take him along as a companion and to pay all expenses, going and coming. Sterne at first demurred, saying that he had scarce time to prepare for the journey and that it would be wrong to leave his wife in her wretched illness. Sterne's hesitancy was, however, easily overcome, and within an hour after packing "his best breeches", he was on the way to London. Reaching town, apparently on the evening of the fourth, the squire and parson lodged with Nathaniel Cholmley, Esq., a York friend, living at that time in Chapel Street, Mayfair. To the surprise of the two other gentlemen, Sterne was missing the next morning at breakfast. He had gone out to Dodsley's at the sign of Tully's Head in Pall Mall to test the sale of his book. On enquiry of the shopman for the works of Mr. Tristram Shandy, he was told that they "could not be had in London either for Love or money". Later in the morning he saw the great Dodsley himself, who readily closed with him for a second edition of *Tristram Shandy*, and for two volumes of sermons to be composed and published within two months. There was some haggling with the publisher over the price. At first the author stood out for £650, then dropped to £600, and eventually accepted, under the terms of the agreement signed on May 19, £450. It seems quite clear, however, that certain moneys advanced by Dodsley were not included in the final sum, for it was understood by everybody—Gray, Walpole, and others—that the lucky author received £600 or more for his book. No time was lost on preliminaries. In the *London Chronicle* for March 8-11, Dodsley announced that a new edition of *Tristram Shandy* would appear in a few days. Elated by his first success, Sterne further promised a fresh volume every year. After placing this mortgage on his brains for the rest of his life, he "returned to Chapell Street and came skipping into the room and said that he was the richest man in Europe".

So swift ran the current of events during the next weeks that our narrative can hardly keep up with it. On the morning of March 6, Sterne called upon "dear Mr. Garrick", and in the evening of the same day attended Drury Lane, where he was "astonished" by the great actor's performance. The play for that night was Home's *Siege of Aquileia*, in which Garrick took the part of the stubborn old Roman general who preferred the welfare of his country to the life of his sons. What occurred within the next day or two, we leave to a letter, dated March 8, to Miss Fourmantelle, still at York. Sterne was sitting solitary and alone in his bedchamber after returning again from the theatre, as he wrote: "I have the greatest honours paid and most civilities shewn me, that were ever known from the Great; and am engaged all ready to ten Noble Men and Men of fashion to dine. Mr. Garrick pays me all and more honour than I could look for. I dined with him to-day, and he has promised Numbers of great People to carry me to dine with 'em. He has given me an Order for the Liberty of his Boxes, and of every part of his House for the whole Season; and indeed leaves nothing undone that can do me either Service or Credit; he has undertaken the management of the Booksellers, and will procure me a great price."*

On first meeting, Garrick told Sterne of a wild rumour in circulation that William Warburton, just elevated to the see of Gloucester, was to be introduced into the next instalment of *Tristram Shandy* as the tutor of Master Tristram. An allegory, to give the story as elaborated by the clubs, had been run up on the life of Job. Warburton was to appear as Satan, who smote the ancient patriarch from head to foot,

* Sterne is reported to have told the story differently to his London friends. According to that version, Garrick at first presented him only with the freedom of the pit at Drury Lane. Meeting the actor some time later, Sterne remarked that Beard, though there was no acquaintance then between them, had offered him the freedom of the whole house over at Covent Garden. "I told him on the occasion," Sterne is made to say of Garrick, "that he *acted* great things and *did* little ones:—So he stammered and looked foolish, and performed, at length, with a bad grace, what his rival manager was so kind as to do with the best grace in the world—But no more of that—he is so complete on the stage, that I ought not to mention his patch-work off it."—*Original Letters of Laurence Sterne*, 60-61 (London, 1788).

while other well-known polemical divines—Zachary Grey, Charles Peters, and Leonard Chappelow, who had been engaged in angry disputes with Warburton, two of them on the Book of Job—were to be brought in as Job's miserable comforters. Through it all, my uncle Toby and Corporal Trim were to operate on the distinguished tutor in the way they had already done with Dr. Slop in compelling him to listen to the sermon on conscience. Sterne had apparently come to London with a half-formed plan similar to this whirling in his head. Had he stayed at home and gone on as was intended, he might have produced a burlesque, as rich as deserved, of the vain pedantries of Warburton and his assailants. But once in London and once aware of the position Warburton held among the bishops, nothing remained for Sterne but to lay the "vile story" to the malice of his enemies. Unable to sleep because of it, Sterne wrote off, near midnight of the sixth, a hurried letter to Garrick asking for an introduction to the author—"God bless him!"—of the *Divine Legation*. The next morning, Garrick sent a note to Warburton on the "impertinent story", and received an immediate reply from Grosvenor Square, in which the bishop expressed a desire to have the distinction of Mr. Sterne's acquaintance. At this first meeting, Sterne was pleased, one can well understand, to find that Warburton had already recommended *Tristram Shandy* to the best company in town, and defended the book in "a very grave assembly" of bishops, apparently against the attacks of Dr. Thomas Newton, the editor of Milton and soon the Bishop of Bristol. Eager to become his patron, Warburton presented Sterne, on one of his visits to Grosvenor Square, with a purse of guineas, and a bundle of books for the improvement of his style. Sterne took the guineas and kept them. He took the books also, but treated the advice that accompanied them with the contempt it deserved. No situation more humorous can easily be imagined than the dull and heavy Warburton instructing the light-hearted Yorick out of Aristotle and Longinus. So unusual was the gift of guineas that it led to a report, though there was nothing in it, that Warburton devised this way to escape becoming tutor to Mr. Tristram Shandy.

The patronage of Warburton, the friend and editor of the late Mr. Pope, as well as the champion of orthodoxy, made Sterne's brilliant reception doubly sure. Garrick could announce to the clubs that he had talked and dined with the author of *Tristram Shandy*, who was just arrived in town. He was a Yorkshire parson named Sterne, Garrick would say; the strangest sort of man he had ever met with; a bundle of contradictions, a jester and sentimentalist like the Yorick of the book, but withal a most agreeable gentleman, easy and affable in manners; in speech wild and reckless mostly, but at times uttering studied compliments in cleverly turned phrases, as if he had long been an adept in the art. It was Warburton's business to make enquiries of Yorkshire clergymen in London respecting Sterne's life in the north—how he was regarded by his brethren and how he had conducted himself as vicar and prebendary. The account Warburton received of Sterne was in all respects "very advantageous". The questionable jests in *Tristram Shandy* were clearly to be ascribed to an exuberance of wit and to the bad taste of a man who had lived out of the great world and its conventions; they were mere scratches, so to speak, upon Mr. Sterne's character, in no way penetrative of heart and brain. His conscience at ease on the score of Sterne's morals, Warburton took the author under his protection and recommended Mr. Tristram Shandy to the whole bench of bishops as "the English Rabelais". The bishops did not know, said Horace Walpole, in commenting on the incident, what was meant by Warburton's phrase, as they had never heard of the French humourist.

From his two friends, the news that the author of *Tristram Shandy* was really in London ran like a flame through society. With a view to impending social demands, Sterne left Cholmley's on the eighth of March; and after looking over Piccadilly and the Haymarket, moved into commodious lodgings at the second house in St. Alban's Street, now no more, just off Pall Mall. Stephen Croft, having finished his business, soon returned into Yorkshire, while Sterne remained to reap the personal delight of his fame. The new apartments, near Dodsley's shop and in the very heart of fashion, became the

centre of extraordinary scenes. "From Morning to night", Sterne wrote to Miss Fourmantelle, "my Lodgings, which by the by, are the genteelest in Town, are full of the greatest Company. I dined these two days with two ladies of the Bedchamber; then with Lord Rockingham, Lord Edgecomb, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a Bishop, &c., &c. I assure you, my Kitty, that Tristram is the Fashion." And again, with additional details, his head still topsy-turvy: "My Lodging is every hour full of your Great People of the first Rank, who strive who shall most honour me:—even all the Bishops have sent their Compliments to me, and I set out on Monday Morning to pay my Visits to them all. I am to dine with Lord Chesterfield this Week, &c. &c., and next Sunday Lord Rockingham takes me to Court. I have snatch'd this single moment, tho' there is company in my rooms, to tell my dear, dear, dear Kitty this, and that I am hers for ever and ever."

And so it went on to the end of the season. Every morning for two months Sterne's rooms were thronged with politicians, courtiers, and men of fashion; and every evening Sterne was hurried off his legs in going to these great people. It was most fitting that Rockingham, the future Prime Minister, should have led the way in honouring the Yorkshire author. At that time Rockingham was Lord-Lieutenant of the North and East Ridings and Vice-Admiral of Yorkshire, with a seat at Malton, not far from Sterne's livings. Since the Marquis and Marchioness of Rockingham were regular subscribers to the Assembly Rooms, where Miss Fourmantelle had sung, Sterne was likely acquainted with both of them long before coming to London. Winchelsea, related to Rockingham by blood, was First Lord of the Admiralty. "Dick" Edgumbe, wit and Privy Councillor, it may be conjectured, first brought together Sterne and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Two of the men of rank who overwhelmed the author with attentions were patrons of literature. Chesterfield, his political days long over, had retired to his luxurious house and garden in Mayfair, to devote himself to literature and the entertainment of his friends. Lyttelton had been the companion of Pope, Thomson, and Fielding, who dedicated to him *Tom*

Jones, and never tired of praising his generosity, talents, and large fund of learning.

Of the associations that were linking Sterne through Lyttelton and Chesterfield to the great names of a past age, none pleased him quite so much as the singular manner in which Lord Bathurst sought him out at Carlton House a few weeks later. Sterne never forgot that distinction. "He came up to me", said Sterne long after, "one day, as I was at the Princess of Wales's court. 'I want to know you, Mr. Sterne; but it is fit you should know, also, who it is that wishes this pleasure. You have heard, continued he, of an old Lord Bathurst, of whom your Popes and Swifts have sung and spoken so much; I have lived my life with geniuses of that cast; but have survived them; and, despairing ever to find their equals, it is some years since I have closed my accounts, and shut up my books, with thoughts of never opening them again; but you have kindled a desire in me of opening them once more before I die; which I now do; so go home and dine with me.' "

It was in truth as fine a compliment as could be paid to genius. The aged peer, who had been the patron and protector of two generations of literary men, was dying in despair of ever meeting their equals again. He saw Sterne, ordered his table spread again, and resolved to live once more.

Amid these honours came that preferment in the Church which Sterne had missed ten years before. He had been disappointed, one may remember, when Coxwold went to his former curate, Richard Wilkinson, owing, it seemed quite clear, to the opposition of his uncle and the Archbishop of York. Since then Dr. Sterne had died and a new archbishop was on the throne. On the tenth of March died also the incumbent of Coxwold, most unexpectedly, for he was still a young man. Within a few days after the news reached London, Lord Fauconberg, then at Court, nominated Sterne, on the solicitation of Stephen Croft, to the vacant living, then estimated at £160 a year above the customary dues; and on March 29, Archbishop Gilbert, who was passing the winter at his house in Grosvenor Square near Warburton's, completed the appointment. By this act all of Sterne's sorrows

and tears were "wiped away". There was nothing more that he could "wish or want in this world".

Near the same time, Sterne was painted in his clerical gown by Sir Joshua Reynolds, at the request of Lord Ossory. The painting afterwards passed to Lord Holland, and at his death to the splendid gallery of the Marquis of Lansdowne. It is a marvellous portrait in pose and feature. As if already fatigued by three weeks of dinners, Sterne, say Reynolds's biographers, propped himself up while sitting to the great painter; and his wig contriving to get a little to one side, Sir Joshua, with the insight of genius, readily took advantage of the accident and painted it so, giving the head the true Shandean air upon which Sterne prided himself. The face, pale and thin, as one would have it, is all intelligence and humour. Reynolds, glad to confront the lion of the hour alone and face to face, would accept no fee. The portrait was at once placed in the hands of Ravenet, who made a mezzotint worthy of the original. With reference to it all, Sterne wrote, his thought on a full purse: "There is a fine print going to be done of me, so I shall make the most of myself and sell both inside and out."*

In the meantime, Dodsley was hastening forward the second edition of *Tristram Shandy*. At Garrick's table, Sterne had sat with Richard Berenger, gentleman of his Majesty's horse, a man of charming mind and manners conjoined with the gayer vices of the age; a sort of Hall-Stevenson bred to the city instead of to the country. To Dr. Johnson he was "the standard of ideal elegance", and Hannah More thought him "all chivalry, blank verse, and anecdote". He bade Garrick's guest tell him all his wants while in London, and he would fulfil them. Taking him at

* The statement, many times repeated, that Reynolds painted Sterne at one sitting is quite erroneous. As shown by Reynolds's *Pocket Book of appointments* (MS now in possession of the Royal Academy of Arts), there were eight sittings: the first on March 20 and the last on April 21.

The famous portrait is carefully described by Graves and Cronin in *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, III, 933-934 (London, 1899):

"Three-quarter length, canvas 50x40 in. . . . Sitting in a wig and gown; right elbow on a table, forefinger to forehead; left arm bent, hand to hip; knee breeches; on table are papers—on one, J. Reynolds, pinxt 1760—and inkstand; a ring on the little finger of left hand."

his word, Sterne addressed to him, as the day for the new edition of *Tristram Shandy* was approaching, a wild, profane letter beginning: "What the duce can the man want now? * * * The Vanity of a pretty woman in the hey-day of her Triumphs, is a Fool to the Vanity of a successful author." This reckless outpour of speech was but preliminary to an urgent request that Mr. Berenger, "a hard faced, impudent, honest dog", should sally out to Leicester Fields and demand of Mr. Hogarth "ten strokes" of his "witty chisel to clap at the Front" of the coming *Tristram Shandy*. Hogarth sent back, free of charge, Trim reading the sermon on conscience in the back parlour of Shandy Hall before Dr. Slop and the two brothers. According to John Croft, it had been Sterne's idea, when first writing his book, to dedicate it to "Mr. Pitt, then Secretary of State, that it might lay in his Parlour Window, and amuse him after the Fatigues of Business as a lounging Book". Thinking, doubtless, that a dedication from a humble clergyman to the Great Commoner might seem impertinent, Sterne abandoned the notion and satisfied himself with a mock epistle to "any one Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, or Baron in these his Majesty's dominions", who would pay fifty guineas for the honour. Though still unacquainted with Pitt, Sterne could now have no hesitation, for he felt himself the equal of any minister of state. On the twenty-eighth of March, he sent his dedication over to Pitt with a brief note, not exactly asking his approval so much as taking it for granted that there could be no offence.

On the third of April, within a month after Sterne had set foot in London, appeared the new edition of *Tristram Shandy*, bearing the old title-page down through the sentence from Epictetus to the addition:

"The SECOND EDITION.

"London:

"Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall Mall.

"M.DCC.LX."

All copies had, I think, the frontispiece by Hogarth, which Ravenet engraved for Dodsley, and most, though not all, of them contained the handsome tribute "To the Right Hon-

ourable Mr. Pitt'', preceded by a paragraph on the circumstances under which the book had been written in "a bye corner of the kingdom, and in a retired thatch'd house". There the author had lived, it was prettily said, "in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles,—but much more so, when he laughs, it adds something to this Fragment of Life''.

The second edition barely satisfied the market for the remnant of the season. Before the end of the year, Dodsley reprinted it twice again, making in all four editions within a twelvemonth, to say nothing of several piracies. As his book became more widely known, the adulation of Sterne went on at a quicker pace than ever. "Tristram Shandy'', the poet Gray wrote to Thomas Wharton on April 22, "is still a greater object of admiration, the man as well as the book. One is invited to dinner, where he dines, a fortnight beforehand." "*Dinners for a month to come*" was John Croft's estimate, so that "it allmost amounted to a Parliamentary Interest to have his company at any rate". Giddy with these attentions, Sterne invited Miss Fourmantelle to come up to London and share with him the closing weeks of his triumph. Obedient to Yorick's call, she reached town by the middle of April and took lodgings in Meard's Court, Soho, within the district of balls, concerts, and masquerades. Sterne quickly saw that he had made a grave mistake in his thoughtlessness. He might hold in the abstract that prudence and discretion are only vices misnamed virtues; but the intimate friend of Garrick and Warburton could not take Kitty, in face of all the world, to Ranelagh or to the theatre, however much she may have set her heart upon these amusements; he could only send her tickets, with the hope that she would use them for herself and her friends. With great difficulty he contrived even to visit her for afternoon tea or for a sentimental evening; and before many days, numerous engagements to others so pressed upon him that he forgot all his appointed hours with her. On a Wednesday he sent her a note explaining why he had not called since Sunday and putting off an engagement until Friday. Five days without

seeing the woman whom he had sworn to make his wife, should Providence so order, and to love forever and ever! "Dear Kitty" could not compete, I fear, with the ladies of her Majesty's bedchamber. So Sterne sent in his excuses for neglect, and the beautiful singer drifted away through concert halls nobody knows whither. The last letter, cutting off a sentence, runs as follows:

"Dear Kitty,—If it would have saved my Life, I have not had one hour or half hour in my power since I saw you on Sunday; else my dear Kitty may be sure I should not have been thus absent. Every minute of this day and to-morrow is pre-engaged, that I am as much a prisoner as if I was in Jayl. I beg, dear girl, you will believe I do not spend an hour where I wish, for I wish to be with you always: but fate orders my steps, God knows how for the present.—Adieu! Adieu!"

How Sterne bore himself among the great people whither fate called him away from dear Kitty and what they thought of him, were told in the April number of the *Royal Female Magazine*, issued on the first of May. The account was immediately copied into nearly all of the London newspapers. A notice so extended as this was rare in the press of the eighteenth century, even on the death of men conspicuous in church and state. Sterne was in truth our first writer about whom people cared much to know—how he lived, how he looked, and what he said and did when among his friends. The man who attempted to inform them was Dr. John Hill, a literary hack and quack-doctor, celebrated for an "elixir of Bardana" and various other nostrums, "excellent beyond parallel". To his purpose, the physician gathered up anecdotes running through the London clubs; and in addition to this, he must have had recourse to a friend of the author—perhaps Nathaniel Cholmley of Chapel Street—for details of Sterne's career in the north. There was in fact a hint abroad that Sterne himself furnished the material. As is evident at a glance, the brief biography that Dr. Hill wrote for the *Royal Female Magazine* contains several inaccuracies, but its general truth is beyond contradiction. It would be a mistake to imagine Sterne as an

awkward and unpolished country parson who had spent his time in the cultivation of his glebe, though he had indeed been engaged in that. He was a gentleman by birth who had been bred at the university; and he had been the associate of gentlemen all his life. His transition to London society was thus not so abrupt as it might seem, abrupt though it was. Notwithstanding many oddities, there was grace, native and acquired, in his manners, so that he adjusted himself to his new surroundings with the greatest ease. "I think", said Dr. Hill, "he is the only man, of whom many speak well, and of whom no body speaks ill. * * * Every body is curious to see the author; and, when they see him, every body loves the man. There is a pleasantness in his conversation that always pleases; and a goodness in his heart, which adds the greater tribute of esteem. Many have wit; but there is a peculiar merit in giving variety. This most agreeable joker can raise it from any subject; for he seems to have studied all; and can suit it to his company; the depth of whose understandings he very quickly fathoms."

The humourist's ability to please by his smart jests and repartees, was slightly qualified by John Croft, who wrote of him: "Sterne was best and shewed himself to most advantage in a small company, for in a large one he was frequently at a Loss and dumb-founded. * * * He wou'd frequently come out with very silly things and expressions, which if they did not meet that share of approbation from the Publick which he expected, he wou'd be very angry and even affrontive." Started by Dr. Hill, a story went through the newspapers of a sharp encounter between Sterne and Dr. Messenger Monsey, long chief physician to the Whig politicians; a learned and skilful man, but ostentatious and otherwise disagreeable in his behaviour. The incident created so great a stir among Dr. Monsey's friends, including Garrick, that Sterne was compelled to soften some of the details, but he could not deny the main facts. In a letter to Stephen Croft, he claimed that Dr. Hill had made a mistake in the physician and in the place where the encounter occurred. Be

this is it may, Sterne silenced the man across the table to the delight of the other guests:

“At the last dinner”, says the tale as originally told, “that the late lost amiable Charles Stanhope gave to Genius, Yorick was present. The good old man was vexed to see a pedantic medicine monger take the lead, and prevent that pleasantry, which good wit and good wine might have occasioned, by a discourse in the unintelligible language of his profession, concerning the difference between the phrenitis, and the paraphrenitis, and the concomitant categories of the mediastinum and pleura.

“Good-humour’d Yorick saw the sense of the master of the feast, and fell into the cant and jargon of physic, as if he had been one of Radcliffe’s travellers. ‘The vulgar practice’, says he, ‘savours too much of mechanical principles; the venerable ancients were all empirics, and the profession will never regain its ancient credit, till practice falls into the old tract again. I am myself an instance; I caught cold by leaning on a damp cushion, and, after sneezing and sniveling a fortnight, it fell upon my breast: they blooded me, blistered me, and gave me robs and bobs, and loboeks, and eclegmeta; but I grew worse: for I was treated according to the exact rules of the college. In short, from an inflammation it came to an ADHESION, and all was over with me. They advised me to Bristol, that I might not do them the scandal of dying under their hands; and the Bristol people, for the same reason, consigned me over to Lisbon. But what do I? why, I considered an adhesion is, in plain English, only a sticking of two things together, and that force enough would pull them asunder. I bought a good ash-pole, and began leaping over all the walls and ditches in the country. From the height of the pole I used to come souce down upon my feet, like an ass when he tramples upon a bull-dog: but it did not do. At last, when I had raised myself perpendicularly over a wall, I used to fall exactly across the ridge of it, upon the side opposite to the adhesion. This tore it off at once, and I am as you see. Come fill a glass to the prosperity of the empiric medicine.’ ”

By the first of May, Sterne, all worn out and jaded,

began to turn his thoughts towards home. In his absence, Stephen Croft had looked after the welfare of his wife and daughter, supplying them with guineas and charging them up to Sterne. Lydia was getting on well at school, though she had been annoyed by being called Miss Tristram and Miss Shandy. Mrs. Sterne was mending so that there could be no further serious thought of Miss Fourmantelle. York had been kept posted of Sterne's extraordinary reception by letters from Cholmley to his friend at Stillington Hall. The anecdotes related by Dr. Hill also came down with the *Royal Female Magazine*, regularly taken at York, where they caused some hostile comment, since they touched on local affairs as well as on Sterne's courses in London. The behaviour of Sterne at dinner with the London physicians was regarded as undignified; and the rumour that he was going to ridicule Warburton, after accepting a purse of guineas from him, disturbed the clergy, for they remembered the *Watch-Coat*. Sterne naturally wished to see his family, to set matters right, and to take up his preferment.

Several causes for delay, however, intervened. It was most difficult for Sterne to withstand the pressure of friends to stay on to the end of the month. At this time he was receiving "great notice" from Prince Edward, just created Duke of York. This royal scion, brother of the Prince of Wales, soon to become king, was a good-humoured young man who gave himself up to pleasure and all manner of social functions. He had a tongue, says Walpole, that ran like a fiddlestick. Some years later he passed over to the south of France, and died there in consequence of cold and fever caught by dancing all night. Sterne supped with the Duke of York, and followed him to fashionable concerts where he was expected to perform. There yet remained, too, the final honour of all the honours that had been lavished on Sterne. He was invited to Windsor. On the sixth of May, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who had won the battle of Minden the year before, was to be installed—in the proxy of Sir Charles Cottrell Dormer—Knight of the Garter, along with Earl Temple, then Lord Privy Seal, and the Marquis of Rockingham, who, as said once before, had taken the York-

shire author under his especial protection. Nearly a week was consumed by the journey to Windsor, the installation, and miscellaneous festivities. The grand procession set out from London with Sterne in the suite of Lord Rockingham. It was a gorgeous scene in Saint George's Chapel on the next day when the investiture of surcoat, belt, and sword took place in accordance with the impressive rites peculiar to this ancient order of chivalry. From the chapel the knights with their retinues moved to the great guard-chamber, where a dinner was served, says Sterne, at a cost of fourteen hundred pounds. Before the second course, Garter King-at-Arms, attended by his knight-companions, entered the hall and proclaimed the styles of Earl Temple and the Marquis of Rockingham. At night there was "a magnificent ball and supper"; and on the next morning the newly elected knights and "the Right Hon. Mr. Secretary Pitt" were granted the freedom of the borough of Windsor. Sterne, then, if never before, met the great statesman to whom he had dedicated *Tristram Shandy*.

On returning to London with Lord Rockingham, Sterne had still many engagements to clear off his books, two volumes of sermons to watch through the press, and the final contract to sign with Dodsley. There were two instruments, each dated May 19, 1760. According to the one, Sterne was yet to receive £450 on the sermons and the first instalment of *Tristram Shandy*; according to the other, Dodsley agreed to pay him £380 for two more volumes of *Tristram Shandy* six months after publication.* With a part of the money already paid in, Sterne purchased a carriage and a pair of horses that he might drive down into Yorkshire "in a superior style". He set out, if he followed his plans of a week before, on Monday the twenty-sixth, that he might surely be in York on the next Sunday to preach in the minster before the judges of the summer session. Here in the great cathedral ended his triumph.

In beginning the story of how the Yorkshire parson came into his fame, I said that it would read like romance. To Sterne himself, it seemed all a dream; for writing to a

* *Willis's Current Notes*, IV, 91 (Nov., 1854).

friend of his sojourn in London, he said: "I was lost all the time I was there, and never found till I got to this Shandy-castle of mine." On that March morning when Stephen Croft by merest chance fell in with him at York, the author of *Tristram Shandy* was a poor and obscure country parson without the means of a journey to London. He was to be "franked" up and back by the squire of Stillington. Within three months he returned in his own carriage and driving his own horses, the best that could be procured. Six weeks at York and Sutton, and he was settled in his new parish. No man was better known in all England. A wager was laid in a company of London wits that a letter addressed "Tristram Shandy, Europe", would reach the popular author. The letter, says John Croft, duly reached York, and "the Post Boy, meeting Sterne on the road to Sutton, pulled off his hatt and gave it him".

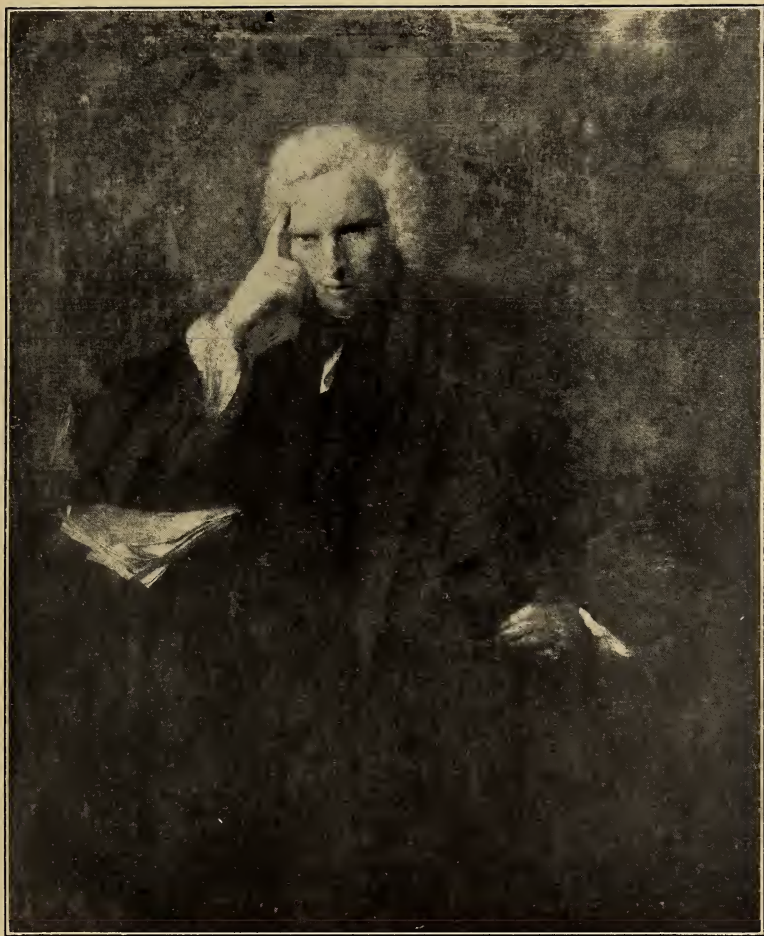
CHAPTER IX

THE SERMONS OF MR. YORICK

MAY AND JUNE, 1760

LOOKED at in other lights, the visit to London loses some of its brilliant hues. A successful author must expect many annoyances, alike from the friends and from the enemies that his books are sure to make; but Sterne perhaps encountered more than any other of his century, if we except Pope. The art, the jests, and the personal character of Mr. Tristram Shandy were all themes for censure as well as for praise. A persisting source of irritation to Sterne was the sketch which "Bardana" Hill drew of him for the newspapers. It had been written with kindly intentions merely for the sake of a guinea or two; but Sterne, unaccustomed as he was to anecdotes and chit-chat about himself, half-truths and half-lies, magnified the good-natured article into a malicious attack upon his honour as a gentleman. For a man so proud of his ancestry as was Sterne, it nettled him, first of all, to be told that he was "born of the barracks". Again, the incumbent of Coxwold had died, leaving, like Trollope's Rev. Mr. Quiverful, as his only estate a poor widow with unnumbered children. A report, coming into print with Dr. Hill, went current that Sterne had promised the destitute woman a hundred pounds outright and a liberal pension. Disclaim it as often as he would, the rumour pursued him through Yorkshire to his perpetual embarrassment; for had he wished to perform the charity, his means would not have allowed it.

Likewise the story that immunity from satire had cost Warburton a purse of guineas could not be laid for all his efforts. Sterne might set it down as a lie; but when it was again put into circulation by Dr. Hill, everybody had it and many believed it. Indeed Warburton, despite the gift, was trembling for what might happen in the next instalment of



Laurence Sterne
From a painting by Reynolds at Lansdowne House

Tristram Shandy. Add to this the indiscreet conduct of Hall-Stevenson. Sterne had been in London but a few weeks when his friend, assuming the name of "Antony Shandy", greeted him with *Two Lyric Epistles*; of which one was addressed "to my Cousin Shandy on his Coming to Town"; while the other was in honour of "the Grown Gentlewomen, the Misses of * * * *"; that is, the Misses of York. It was not a squeamish age. "Fine ladies" as well as "fine gentlemen" repeated and laughed at jests and stories coarser than any in the collection of Mr. Tristram Shandy; but Hall-Stevenson went rather beyond the relish of well-bred people of either sex; and Sterne was held responsible for his cousin Antony's offence against this better public taste. Though that was not quite just, he nevertheless read the epistles in manuscript, showing them to his acquaintance, and permitted them to go to Dodsley's press, after striking out a stanza here and there. Over these puerile verses, discreditable alike to all who had a hand in them, the friendship between Sterne and Warburton was strained near to the breaking-point. Sterne's full confession and penitence barely saved him.

But Hall-Stevenson and Dr. Hill were only the beginning of Sterne's troubles. Six weeks in London, and all Grub Street broke loose at his heels. On its first appearance, the reviewers for the standard monthlies had accepted, we have seen, *Tristram Shandy* as a book of unusual wit when compared with the humorous trash then coming from the press. They did not know at the time that the author was a clergyman, deserving to be unfrocked for playing the part of a king's jester. Their favourable opinion once delivered, they remained silent on the reissue of *Tristram Shandy*, except for casual reference to it, though they were but lying in wait for an opportune moment to attack. For a time the newspapers, whose printers, or editors as we should now call them, took no pains to form an independent estimate, merely reflected the magazines; but towards the end of April, after the second edition of *Shandy* was out, they opened fire. On April 28, the *Public Ledger*, to cite one instance, published the first of a short series of imaginary letters from

Mr. Tristram Shandy to his friend Bob Busby, in which the young man claimed, in opposition to Sterne, that he had been regularly born, and appealed to Dr. Slop in proof of it.

The merriment once begun, some one calling himself a Quaker by name Ebenezer Plain-Cloth, sent a letter to the editor in protest against the intrusion into public prints of "the frontless face" of Tristram Shandy. This is a specimen of what Sterne might see on taking up a newspaper at any time for the rest of his life. Scribblers who required larger scope for their wit resorted to shilling pamphlets running from forty to a hundred pages or more. Some of these pamphleteers adopted an abusive tone, wildly charging Sterne with various social and literary vices; while others imitated or burlesqued his book solely in the hope of making a few shillings out of its popularity. Of Sterne the man they knew nothing and cared nothing one way or the other. On reading the first of these lucubrations, Sterne remarked in a letter from London to Stephen Croft: "There is a shilling pamphlet wrote against Tristram—I wish they would write a hundred such." But as one mill after another took to grinding out *Shandys*, Sterne grew uneasy. "The scribblers", he began to complain, "use me ill, but they have used my betters much worse, for which may God forgive them." Finally, his nerves all shattered by three months of social dissipation, he fell into a semi-insane delusion, just as had occurred in the quarrel with his uncle, that a host of "profligate wretches" were setting upon him in the dark "with cuffs, kicks, and bastinadoes", that they might kill him with the public. In one of these moods he wrote to Warburton near the middle of June: "I wish from my heart I had never set pen to paper, but continued hid in the quiet obscurity in which I had so long lived; I was quiet, for I was below envy and yet above want."


Heaven forbid that we should go far into the pamphlets which so worked upon Sterne that he was on the point of renouncing authorship, though the narrative might not be without entertainment. "God forgive me", he wrote to Miss Macartney, afterwards Lady Lyttelton, "God forgive me for the Volumes of Ribaldry I've been the cause of."*

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

The pamphlet which Sterne wished, on first perusal, multiplied a hundred-fold was *The Clockmaker's Outcry against the Author of the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. According to the fiction of the elaborate jest, a number of London clockmakers, meeting casually at their club, fall foul of the notorious clock scene at the opening of Sterne's first volume. One of the members, indignant beyond the rest at the humourist's treatment of an honourable trade, takes up *Tristram Shandy*, incident by incident, and denounces all, even the death of poor Yorick, which, though praised for its pathos, is declared to be "intirely borrowed". Some one of the company, if I remember correctly, ventured to put in a word in favour of the clever "scale of beauty" which Mr. Shandy applied to his mock dedication to any lord who would pay for it. Swift came the retort from the interrupted speaker to the effect that nobody should be so ignorant as not to know that the scale was stolen from the ingenious Mr. Spence's *Crito, or Dialogue on Beauty*.* As a whole, *Tristram Shandy* was pronounced to be nothing more than an imitation of *A Tale of a Tub*. Only there is this striking difference: Swift's wit is never without aim, while Sterne drifts on helplessly from one poor jest to another still poorer until he reaches inanity. In concluding his discourse, the angry clockmaker charged Sterne with the ruin of his business by degrading a harmless and necessary piece of furniture. "The directions", he complained, "that I had for making several clocks for the country, are now countermanded; because no modest lady dares to mention a word about winding up a clock, without exposing herself to the * * * jokes of the family. * * * Alas, reputable, hoary clocks, that have flourished for ages are ordered to be taken down by virtuous Matrons and disposed of as * * * lumber." The whimsical pamphlet bore an ironical dedication to "the humblest of Christian prelates", that is, to the ostentatious Warburton, who was taken to task for abetting Sterne's crime against society.

About this time issued from another press *Explanatory*

* So it was. See Spence, *Fugitive Pieces on Various Subjects*, I, 43-45 (third edition, London 1771).

Remarks upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy; wherein the Morals and Politics of the Piece are clearly laid open, by one who claimed to be the son of the physician whom Sterne had ridiculed in his seventh chapter. The brochure, which need not be described here, closed with an "Advertisement to the Nobility and Gentry of all Europe", containing some good raillery of Sterne's great reception. "As I expect", says the author, "in consequence of the foregoing work, to receive invitations on every hand for parties of pleasure, regales, dinners, and suppers—in order to prevent confusion in my engagements, and that I may not make appointments with persons I am intirely ignorant of, I beg the world, with all convenient despatch, send their titles, names, and places of abodes, with cards to my bookseller's, that I may pay compliments to them, according to their different ranks; or, where upon a footing, according to their alphabetical succession. N. B. Such noblemen, &c. as chuse to give me testimony of their approbation of this book, by particular marks of their beneficence, will please to take notice, that no *living*, however lucrative, can be accepted as I am not in orders.  I am particularly obliged to the managers of both the houses, whose kind intentions I already anticipate, in favouring me with the freedom of their respective theatres, and they may depend upon my compliments to them in due time;—but I am afraid I can not accept Mr. [Garriek]'s kind invitation to his house at *Hampton* this summer."

After these two pamphlets came the deluge: *The Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*, which cost two shillings or double the usual price; *Tristram Shandy at Ranelagh*, a miserable performance; *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*, "printed on the same Size as *Tristram Shandy* and very proper to be bound with it", containing a *littera infernalis* from the departed Yorick to his admirers on earth; *Letter from a Methodist Preacher to Mr. Sterne*; *Letter from the Rev. George Whitfield, B.A., to the Rev. Laurence Sterne, M.A.*; *The Cream of Jest, or The Wits Outwitted* * * * being an entire new Collection of droll Wit and Humour, written and collected by Corporal Trim during his Travels

with *Mr. Tobias Shandy, etc. etc.* Something better than any in this list was *Yorick's Meditations upon Various Interesting and Important Subjects, * * * upon Nothing, upon Tobacco, upon Noses, upon the Man in the Moon, etc.*, for several reviewers took it to be really Yorick's, and the author of the tract received sufficient encouragement from the public to proceed with *A Supplement to the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, "the best ape", said the *London Magazine*, "of the original Shandy we have yet seen". A more elaborate continuation of *Tristram Shandy* appeared in September from the pen of one John Carr, the translator of Lucian, and then or afterwards head-master of the Hertford grammar school. It seemed to the schoolmaster that it was time for Tristram to be born, and so he brought him into the world. Carr attempted to pass off his book as a genuine third volume of *Tristram Shandy*, but the critics quickly detected the fraud. From these and similar burlesques, criticisms, and forgeries, with which the London booksellers flooded the town, Sterne could find no escape even in his Yorkshire retreat. If he looked into a London or a local newspaper, there they were all advertised; if he strolled into a bookstall at York, there they stared him full in the face. All this trash and abuse suggested, however, to an unknown wit a practical jest that diverted Yorick exceedingly when he heard of it some years later; and when it was related to Dr. Johnson, it brought forth a rhinoceros laugh. A certain gentleman, asking a friend to lend him an amusing book from his private library, was recommended to try *Hermes*, a dry and technical treatise on universal grammar by the learned James Harris. "The gentleman from the title", so the anecdote goes, "conceived it to be a novel, but turning it over and over, could make nothing out of it, and at last coldly returned it with thanks. His friend asked him how he had been entertained. 'Not much', he replied, 'he thought that all these imitations of *Tristram Shandy* fell far short of the original.' " *

* Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, I, 207-8 (London, 1826); and G. B. Hill, *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 70-71 (London, 1897).

To have done with the scribblers who pestered Sterne with tags to his book, it is noticeable that he saw few men of letters while in London. The people who left their cards at the genteel rooms in St. Alban's Street and invited the popular author to their tables, necessarily lay outside the realm of literature, except for a patronising nobleman here and there, like Bathurst and Lyttelton. The men who were earning an honest living by their pens could afford of course no elaborate dinners; yet some of them might have made Sterne's acquaintance, had they so desired. A compliment to *Rasselas* in *Tristram Shandy* was an open bid for the friendship of Dr. Johnson; but Garrick never brought the two men together. And when they did meet by mere accident more than a year later, it was with a clash of arms. Dr. Johnson and the rest were content to watch Sterne's progress through the mansions of the great and to make their comments thereon, occasionally in praise but more often in blame. For all the attentions lavished on him by rank and wealth, Sterne did not stand very well the test of the best critical opinion. Though he could not have known just what was being said of him in private companies and in the literary correspondence of the year, he was yet aware of a very hostile undercurrent. So in his sober moments, he was accustomed to liken himself, when complimented upon his prodigious run, to a fashionable mistress, whom everybody is courting because it is the fashion; but let a few weeks pass, and she will in vain "solicit Corporal Stare for a dinner".

It was not quite so bad as Sterne would make out. Thomas Wharton, then at Old Park, near Durham, wrote to the poet Gray in praise of *Tristram Shandy*, and the Cambridge recluse said in reply: "There is much good fun in it, and humour sometimes hit and sometimes missed. I agree with your opinion of it and shall see the future volumes with pleasure."* On the other hand, Horace Walpole, in giving Sir David Dalrymple of Edinburgh the literary news of the month, took occasion to say: "At present, nothing is talked

* Letter to Wharton, July, 1760, in *Works of Thomas Gray*, edited by E. Gosse, III, 53 (London, 1885).

of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance: it is a kind of novel, called *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*; the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying that it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours.”* “A fashionable thing”, Walpole called *Shandy* in sending a parcel of books to Horace Mann at Florence; and when he fell in with Sterne a few years later at Paris, he found the man’s talk as tiresome as his writings. In neither, he said, was there anything to raise a laugh, though one were in a mood for laughter.

Of men of letters, Goldsmith alone spoke out in print against *Tristram Shandy*. Not yet author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, he was then contributing to the *Public Ledger* his *Chinese Letters*, since known as the *Citizen of the World*. Between Sterne and Goldsmith as they appear to-day, one is impressed more by real similarities than by surface differences. Goethe, everybody knows, coupled the two names, in order to say that their genial humour and sane philosophy of life more than all else rescued him from Wertherian despair. But Goldsmith, all form, disliked the broken style of Sterne; and his imagination, immaculate as a maid’s, could not endure Sterne’s salacious wit. And so gathering up what gall there was in his white liver, he poured it forth on *Tristram Shandy* in his newspaper for June 30, and in subsequent issues.† From him may have come, indeed, the *Ledger’s* imaginary letters to which we have previously referred. “I bought last season”, said a London bookseller to Goldsmith’s Chinaman, “a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha ha’s, three good things, and a garter. And yet it played off, and bounced, and cracked, and made more sport than a fire-work. * * * Ah, sir, that was a piece touched

* Letter to Dalrymple, April 4, 1760, in *Letters of Horace Walpole*, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee, IV, 369 (Oxford, 1903).

† For example, the *Public Ledger*, September 17, 1760.

off by the hand of a master, filled with good things from one end to the other. The author had nothing but the jest in view; no dull moral lurking beneath, nor ill-natured satire to sour the reader's good-humour; he wisely considered, that moral and humour at the same time were quite overdoing the business." At this point the visiting Oriental asked why such a book was published; and he quickly received the reply: "Sir, the book was published in order to be sold; and no book sold better, except the criticisms upon it, which came out soon after." Sterne had revived, it was more directly alleged by Goldsmith, two obsolete forms of humour not much practised since Tom D'Urfey and his wretched crew. They may be called "bawdry and pertness", and "they are of such a nature, that the merest blockhead, by a proper use of them, shall have the reputation of a wit: they lie level to the meanest capacities, and address those passions which all have, or would be ashamed to disown". And finally of Sterne's style: "He must talk in riddles. * * * He must speak of himself, and his chapters, and his manner, and what he would be at, and his own importance, and his mother's importance, with the most un pitying prolixity; now and then testifying his contempt for all but himself, smiling without a jest, and without wit professing vivacity."

Dr. Johnson, much as he despised *Tristram Shandy*, thought Goldsmith went too far in writing the author down a blockhead, though he had himself called Fielding a blockhead. Not this year but with reference to another and similar season, Johnson remarked to Goldsmith one day: "The man, Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." "And a very dull fellow", added Goldsmith. "Why, no, Sir", replied Johnson, and the conversation ended.*

Strict moralists of narrower outlook than Dr. Johnson were enraged at Sterne's performance. Richard Farmer, then classical tutor at Cambridge, spoke sharply to a company of students who in the very parlour of Emmanuel were expressing admiration of *Tristram Shandy*. "Mark my

* Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson*, edited by Dobson, II, 44-45 (London, 1901).

words'', was his solemn prophecy, ''and remember what I say to you; however much it may be talked about at present, yet, depend upon it, in the course of twenty years, should any one wish to refer to the book in question, he will be obliged to go to an antiquary to inquire for it.''* Another storm centre was Delville House overlooking the harbour of Dublin, the residence of Mary Granville the Blue-Stocking, and her husband Patrick Delany, the Dean of Down and an old friend of Swift's. Faulkner, the Dublin bookseller, cried up *Tristram Shandy* to one of their clerical friends, and so they were on the brink of purchasing the book to read aloud by the fireside, when a note of warning arrived from Mrs. John Dewes, Mrs. Delany's sister in England. Whereupon the dean became ''very angry'' with Sterne, and declared that the book should never enter his house. Mrs. Delany, accepting her husband's decision, was terribly alarmed that *Tristram Shandy* should have been received in the household of Robert Clayton, Bishop of Cork and Ross, whom it diverted more than offended. ''Mrs. Clayton and I'' she wrote to her sister by the middle of May, ''had a furious argument about reading books of a bad tendency; I stood up for preserving a purity of mind, and discouraging works of *that kind*—*she* for trusting to her *own strength and reason*, and bidding defiance to any injury such books could do her.''†

Anxiety was felt in still other remote places for the influence of Sterne upon the morals of the kingdom. Mark Hildesley, for example, Bishop of Sodor and Man, and sometime chaplain to Lord Bolingbroke, enquired in the postscript of a letter to Samuel Richardson: ''Pray, who is this Yorick? (a prebendary of York, I know he is). But what say you to his compositions, that have of late commanded so much of the attention and admiration of the wits of the present age. I am told, they have the countenance and recommendation

* B. N. Turner's account of Dr. Johnson's visit to Cambridge in 1765, in the *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register* for December, 1818; and *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 429.

† Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes April 24, and May 14, 1760, in the *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, first series, III, 588, 593 (London, 1861).

of some ingenious Dutchess: is this true or not?" Richardson wrote back: "Who is this Yorick? you are pleased to ask me. You cannot, I imagine, have looked into his books: execrable I cannot but call them." And then, casting his more detailed opinion into the form of a letter from a young lady in London to her friend in the country, the novelist went on to say of *Tristram Shandy*: "It is, indeed, a little book, and little is its merit, though great has been the writer's reward! Unaccountable wildness; whimsical incoherencies; uncommon indecencies; all with an air of novelty, has caught the reader's attention, and applause has flown from one to another, till it is almost singular to disapprove: Yet * * * if forced by friends, or led by curiosity, you have read, and laughed, and almost cried at Tristram, I will agree with you that there is subject for mirth, and some affecting strokes, * * * and I most admire the author for his judgment in seeing the town's folly in the extravagant praises and favours heaped on him; for he says, he passed unnoticed by the world till he put on a fool's coat, and since that every body admires him!" After receiving Richardson's strictures "upon the indelicately witty Yorick", the Bishop of Sodor and Man "accidentally read" some passages in the book and renamed it "Shameless Shandy."*

Moralists and men of letters as far apart in temper as Richardson and Walpole, commonly excepted from their reprobation Yorick's "excellent sermon of a peculiar kind on conscience", which Sterne had introduced into his book, as one of a handsome volume at the service of the public. Criticism like that which we have repeated, only less violent, had been passed upon *Tristram Shandy*, from its inception, by Sterne's clerical brethren at York who saw the manuscript. Out of this criticism came no doubt the idea of balancing his character, so to speak, by following up the book with a collection of his sermons. With this end in view, he seems to have packed a bundle of them along with his best clothes on that March morning when he set out for London with the squire of Stillington. The preliminary agreement

* Mrs. A. L. Barbauld, *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, V, 144-153 (London, 1804).

made with Dodsley a few days later was, it will be recalled, not only for a second edition of *Tristram Shandy*, but also for two volumes of sermons. After long delay and a continuous stream of advertisements in the newspapers, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* made their appearance on the twenty-second of May, the week before their author stepped into his carriage for the journey homewards. The two volumes, containing fifteen sermons in the whole, were brought out in the form and type of *Tristram Shandy*, with the Reynolds portrait as engraved by Ravenet for frontispiece. There was a curious preface, written partly as an apology for the author's pseudonym and for the haste with which the volumes had been put through the press, and partly to explain their character and to forestall a possible charge of plagiarism:

“The sermon which gave rise to the publication of these, having been offer'd to the world as a sermon of *Yorick's*, I hope the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing these two volumes under the same title: lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title page with the real name of the author:—the first will serve the bookseller's purpose, as *Yorick's* name is possibly of the two the more known;—and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant. * * * I have little to say in their behalf, except this, that not one of them was composed with any thoughts of being printed,—they have been hastily wrote, and carry the marks of it along with them.—This may be no recommendation;—I mean it however as such; for as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten subjects, must not look for many new thoughts,—’tis well if he has new language; in three or four passages, where he has neither the one or the other, I have quoted the author I made free with—there are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty,—but ’tis only suspicion, for I do not remember it

is so, otherwise I should have restored them to their proper owners, so that I put it in here more as a general saving, than from a consciousness of having much to answer for upon that score."

The second title-page, which was added for the comfort of the clergy and professional moralists, ran: "Sermons by Laurence Sterne, A.M. Prebendary of York, and Vicar of Sutton on the Forest, and of Stillington near York." Between the preface and the second title was printed a list of six hundred and sixty-one subscribers, which gathered in nearly every one worth knowing in the kingdom—dukes, duchesses, earls, and countesses; bishops, deans, university fellows, canons, and prebendaries; statesmen, politicians, and physicians; long rows of men who could write esquire after their names, and Mr. Charles Burney, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Hogarth, Mr. Reynolds, William Whitehead the Poet Laureate, and Mr. Wilkes, Member for Aylesbury. In reading through the list, one wonders what use could be made of sermons by Wilkes, the profane politician, or by playwrights, actors, and wits, like Beard and Rich and Delaval. But taken as a whole, it was a handsome troop of titles and names which Sterne could show to his Yorkshire friends in proof of his great and sudden fame.

Sterne's sermons thus entered the world, guarded, as the author thought, with every precaution for their safety: no preface could be franker; no roll of patrons could be more impressive. But within a fortnight they were visited by a fierce assault from one of Griffiths's men in the *Monthly Review* for May. The point of attack was not the character of the sermons themselves, but their appearance under the assumed name of Mr. Yorick. This manner of publication, the angry reviewer considered "as the greatest outrage against Sense and Decency, that has been offered since the first establishment of Christianity—an outrage which would scarce have been tolerated even in the days of paganism. * * * For who is this *Yorick*? We have heard of one of that name who was a *Jester*—we have read of a *Yorick* likewise, in an obscene Romance.—But are the solemn dictates of religion fit to be conveyed from the mouths of

Buffoons and ludicrous Romancers? Would any man believe that a Preacher was in earnest, who should mount the pulpit in a Harlequin's coat?" Likewise a venerable prelate remonstrated with Sterne for his unseemly conduct, protesting that "he could not bear to look into sermons wrote by the king of Denmark's jester". The conversation that ensued, ending with Yorick's witty retort to the troubled ecclesiastic, may be read in the *Sentimental Journey*:

"Good my lord! said I; but there are two Yoricks. The Yorick your lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years ago; he flourish'd in Horwendillus's court—the other Yorick is myself, who have flourish'd, my lord, in no court—He shook his head—Good God! said I, you might as well confound Alexander the Great with Alexander the Coppersmith, my lord—'Twas all one, he replied.

"—— If Alexander king of Macedon could have translated your lordship, said I, I'm sure your lordship would not have said so."

Aside from title and preface, the pretty volumes were greeted with universal praise. Even Griffiths's man, bitter though he was at the outset, went through the sermons one by one in two issues of his magazine; and, carried away by the preacher's eloquence, he was ready to avow after the first volume: "We know of no compositions of this kind in the English language, that are written with more ease, purity, and elegance; and tho' there is not much of the pathetic or devotional to be found in them, yet there are many fine and delicate touches of the human heart and passions, which, abstractedly considered, shew marks of great benevolence and sensibility of mind. If we consider them as moral Essays, they are, indeed, highly commendable, and equally calculated for the entertainment and instruction of the attentive Reader." Smollett's man in the *Critical Review* for May apprehended that Yorick's name on the title-page might be an offence to moralists and bigots; but for himself he beheld with pleasure "this son of Comus descending from the chair of mirth and frolick, to inspire sentiments of piety, and read lectures in morality, to that very audience whose

hearts he has captivated with good-natured wit, and facetious humour. Let the narrow-minded bigot persuade himself that religion consists in a grave forbidding exterior and austere conversation; let him wear the garb of sorrow, rail at innocent festivity, and make himself disagreeable to become righteous; we, for our parts, will laugh and sing, and lighten the unavoidable cares of life by every harmless recreation: we will lay siege to Namur with uncle *Toby* and *Trim*, in the morning, and moralize at night with Sterne and Yorick; in one word, we will ever esteem religion when smoothed with good humour, and believe that piety alone to be genuine, which flows from a heart, warm, gay, and social." The long panegyric was broken by only one discordant note. The reviewer thought that Sterne had carried his familiar style, almost uniformly beautiful in its simplicity, to excess in the famous sermon which opens with a denial of the text. It was undignified, all must agree, for the preacher to set his own wisdom against the wisdom of Solomon.

The poet Gray, who understood the jest of the preacher exactly, enquired of his friend Thomas Wharton: "Have you read his sermons (with his own comic figure at the head of them)? they are in the style, I think, most proper for the pulpit, and shew a very strong imagination and a sensible heart: but you see him often tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of his audience."* Even some of the Delany-Granville set who would not take in *Shandy*, were almost persuaded by the sermons that they had misjudged the author. "Pray read", Lady Cowper enjoined Mrs. Dewes, "Yorick's sermons, though you would not read *Tristram Shandy*. They are more like Essays. I like them extremely, and I think he must be a good man."† Dr. Johnson was among the very few who were never quite won over. On a visit to Lichfield, an old friend placed a volume of the sermons in his hand for an opinion. Johnson asked him whether he ever read any others. "Yes, Doctor", replied his friend, "I read Sherlock, Tillotson, Beveridge, and others." "Ay, Sir",

* Letter to Wharton, July, 1760.

† *Autobiography and Correspondence*, first series, III, 593.

retorted Johnson, “*there* you drink the cup of Salvation to the bottom; here you have merely the froth from the surface.” At another time Johnson nevertheless admitted that he had read Yorick’s sermons while travelling in a stage coach; but he added “I should not have even deigned to look at them had I been at large.”*

For some reason the notion has prevailed that Yorick’s sermons were never really delivered; that they are only a bastard literary form, cast in a homiletic mould for the sake of publication. Sterne, however, made an explicit statement to the contrary. “Not one of them”, said his preface, “was composed with any thoughts of being printed.” Their publication, as I have remarked once before, was clearly an afterthought—a late device, as it were, on Sterne’s part for averaging himself up with the public, and, I may add now, for laying a further tax upon the nobility and gentry of the realm. Besides his two parishes, Sterne had held for twenty years a prebend in York Cathedral. Twice every year—on the sixth Sunday in Lent and the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity—he drove in from Sutton to take his turns at the minster, and at various other times to supply the places of his brethren, especially of his friend Dean Fountayne, who, according to the usual arrangements, was appointed to preach the sermon for All Saints. The young prebendary, eager for preferment, liked this work, for it kept him before the public—and put every year twenty guineas into his purse. By 1760, he seems to have had by him thirty-odd sermons, carefully written out and laid aside, most of which had been prepared for the cathedral pulpit, and two of them for unusual occasions. From this convenient repertory were selected without doubt the fifteen that went into print.


In making up the volumes for the press, some caution was needed on Sterne’s part, due to his habit of drawing freely from the great preachers of the past. His chief model, despite Dr. Johnson’s contrast between them, was Archbishop Tillotson, whom Sterne had read at the university and kept by him ever since. Next to Tillotson was Dr. Edward Young, Dean of Sarum and father of the poet, whose sermons were

* *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II, 429.

likewise a Cambridge book. Near them lay also, in Sterne's estimation, Dr. Joseph Hall, the unfortunate Bishop of Norwich back in the reign of Charles the Second, whose *Decades* and *Contemplations* could be easily expanded into sermons. Besides these three, there rested on Sterne's shelf several other divines who were occasionally taken down and placed on his desk during the process of composition. From any one of them he might work out a sermon acceptable to his congregation, repeating and amplifying the original as much as he liked. But the issue under his own name of patch-works or paraphrases was a thing to be avoided.

For his future guidance it was the custom of the imaginary Yorick, says Mr. Tristram Shandy, "on the first leaf of every sermon which he composed, to chronicle down the time, the place, and the occasion of its being preached: to this, he was ever wont to add some short comment or stricture upon the sermon itself, seldom, indeed, much to its credit:—For instance, *This sermon upon the Jewish dispensation—I don't like it at all;—Though I own there is a world of WATER-LANDISH knowledge in it,—but 'tis all tritcal, and most tritcally put together.—This is but a flimsy kind of a composition; what was in my head when I made it?*

"N.B. *The excellency of this text is, that it will suit any sermon,—and of this sermon,—that it will suit any text.*——"

"—— *For this sermon I shall be hanged,—for I have stolen the greatest part of it. Doctor PAIDAGUNES found me out.  Set a thief to catch a thief.*——"

This was also Sterne's custom as attested by Isaac Reed, the editor of Shakespeare, who saw the manuscript of two of Sterne's sermons and copied out the whimsical remarks sprawled across them. At the end of one bearing the title "Our Conversation in Heaven" was the endorsement: "Made for All Saints and preach'd on that Day 1750 for the Dean. —Present: one Bellows Blower, three Singing Men, one Vicar and one Residentiary.—Memorandum: Dined with Duke Humphrey." At the end of the other, entitled "The Ways of Providence Justified to Man", Sterne wrote: "I

have borrowed most of the Reflections upon the Characters from Wollaston, or at least have enlarged from his hints, though the Sermon is truly mine such as it is.”* And to the comment on the first of the two, the preacher might have added that the text and much else had been taken from Tillotson on “The Happiness of a Heavenly Conversation”.

These two sermons Sterne cast aside for the present; but it was difficult for him to find fifteen which showed no traces of his borrowings. “Job’s Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life” went in with the original memorandum printed as a footnote: “N.B. Most of these reflections upon the Miseries of Life are taken from Wollaston”, that is, from the widely read *Religion of Nature*. “Evil Speaking”, though mainly a restatement of Tillotson “Against Evil Speaking”, passed muster after a casual reference to the witty archbishop. “Joseph’s History” acknowledged a paraphrase from Steele’s *Christian Hero*, but forgot Hall’s “Contemplation on Joseph” out of which the sermon had been elaborated. It likewise seems to have slipped the preacher’s mind that the charity sermon on “Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath” contained literal repetitions from Hall’s “Elijah at Sarepta”. To cover these and all other cases where notes or memory failed him, Sterne regarded as sufficient the general apology of his preface. It was of course not necessary for him to inform the public that the sermon on “Self-Knowledge” was merely a dilution of the one on “The Abuses of Conscience”, which everybody had read in *Shandy*; for when a man has once said a good thing, there can be no harm in his repeating it. Doctor Paidagunes could find no fault with an author for doing that.

Quite as interesting as what Sterne said or omitted to say about the old divines who collaborated, as it were, with him on his sermons, are his notes on time and place of delivery. “The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath” was

* These remarks were copied by Reed into a volume containing Sterne’s first two sermons, published at York in 1747 and 1750 respectively. The volume is now owned by Mr. W. A. White of New York City. The sermon on *Penances*, now in the library of J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq., has the following memorandum at the end: “Preached April 8th, 1750. Present: Dr. Herring, Dr. Wanly, Mr. Berdmore.”

delivered, as we remember, at St. Michael-le-Belfrey before the charity schools of York on Good Friday, 1747, and published soon after. "Very few" read, said a new advertisement, this eloquent sermon, which the author placed among the best. "The Character of Herod", a footnote explained, was preached on Innocents' Day, presumably in the minster for the Dean of York. "The Pharisee and Publican in the Temple" was, in like manner, assigned to Lent, when the preacher came in to take his turn as Prebendary of North Newbald. To the same season belongs also, as the footnote again expressly declares, "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning", one of Sterne's most brilliant studies in contrast. Many have believed that this sermon at least, whatever may be said of the rest, could never have been delivered. But the evidence all points to the contrary. It is almost a certainty that Sterne, rising into the cathedral pulpit on his Sunday in Lent, near the close of his residence at Sutton, and reading from Ecclesiastes, proceeded forthwith to attack the truth of his text with the startling phrase "That I deny". Except that it may be "fruitful in virtue", declared the preacher in conclusion, "Sorrow * * * has no use but to shorten a man's days—nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impose upon the other".

Other notable sermons, like the one on happiness or its companion on philanthropy, were included without a note; perhaps because Sterne looked upon them as wholly his own and as suitable for any day in the church calendar. But if we had the full secret of these and the rest, we should doubtless find that they were published practically as they had been written at sundry times for his cathedral congregation. This is not to say that he did not make many minor changes in them as they were going through the press, adding or dropping out words, phrases, and clauses here and there to the advantage of his style. Such was his method, as we may see by comparing the three printed versions which we have of the sermon on conscience. "That I deny", it may be, was an afterthought in place of a more general repudiation

of Solomon. But that Sterne's revision of his sermons for Dodsley went beyond details is really impossible. Had he wished it, there was no time for rewriting them during the months he was in London marching from one great house to another.

Taking Sterne's first sermons as they stand, with all their faults and with all their commonplaces repeated out of Tillotson and others, they fully deserved the applause that attended their publication. Some of them could not have been very effective as spoken discourses. At times, we know, Sterne failed utterly as a preacher. When it was his turn to preach in the minster, "half of the Congregation", says John Croft, "usually went out of the Church as soon as he mounted the Pulpit, as his Delivery and Voice were so very disagreeable". This we can well understand in the case of the more perfunctory sermons wherein the preacher made no effort to keep his congregation awake. But it was not always so. On special occasions, when he brought to bear upon his theme all the resources of an eloquent rhetoric, he filled church or cathedral and "gave great content to every hearer". According to a story which Sterne himself is reported to have related to a company of fellow clergymen, he was addressed one Sunday, as he was descending from the cathedral pulpit, by a poor widow sitting on the steps. She enquired of him where she might have the honour of hearing him preach on the next Sunday. After she had followed him about to his great discomfort for a succession of Sundays from one church to another, always taking the same position on the steps of the pulpit and always asking the same question, he finally chose as his text, modifying Holy Writ, the words: "I will grant the request of this poor widow, lest by continual coming she weary me." "Why, Sterne", immediately retorted one of the company, "you omitted the most applicable part of the passage, which is,—Though I neither fear God nor regard man." "The unexpected retort", it was added, "silenced the wit for the whole evening."*

* Rev. John Adams, *Elegant Anecdotes and Bon Mots*, 267-268 (London, 1790).

Uneven as they are for the pulpit, most of Sterne's sermons are admirable for the closet. In one of their aspects, they were correctly described by contemporary reviewers as brief moral essays, any one of which may be easily read in fifteen minutes, or an entire volume at a sitting. After it is all over, a reader lays aside the book in a gentle frame of mind, having been soothed for two hours by a quiet and not too insistent optimism. He has been disturbed by nothing doctrinal, by no undue religious fervour, and by little religious cant—that jargon of the pulpit compounded of ill-understood and ill-related Biblical metaphors. If a passage becomes dull now and then, it is succeeded by a gay thrust at the Church of Rome, a flash of humour, or an apt quotation from Shakespeare, Epicurus, or Plutarch. Walter Bagehot, unfortunately one of the last, I suppose, to look through Sterne's sermons, was disappointed to find that "there is not much of heaven and hell" in them. "Auguste Comte", he went on to say, "might have admitted most of these sermons; they are healthy statements of earthly truths, but they would be just as true if there was no religion at all; * * * if the 'valuable illusion' of a deity were omitted from the belief of mankind."* What the astute critic said is somewhere near the truth; and the statement is to their favour, though it was not meant to be so. Sterne could have given no offence to the deists of his age. In fact, he associated with them and prepared—as will be duly related—one sermon especially for a famous group of them. He preached a sort of common-sense philosophy, which, if it had little to do with Christian dogmas, never contradicted them. The evil and disorder in the world was as apparent to him as to the philosophers; he yet believed implicitly in the essential goodness of human nature and in the wise and just ways of Providence. The author of *Yorick's sermons*, said Lady Cowper, must be after all a good man; certainly a good man, if he followed his own instruction.

Apart from their excellent morality, Sterne aptly called his sermons "dramatic". Very likely he had in mind to some extent the breaks and pauses of the preacher and his

* Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, II, 111 (London, 1879).

direct addresses to Solomon, to St. Paul, or to God Himself in the course of the delivery; with all of whom he professed to disagree, though in the end he would come to the conclusion that the Scriptures, if properly interpreted, were probably in the right. But Sterne was more than an actor. His best sermons are embryonic dramas, in which an effort is made to visualise scene and character, as though he were writing for the stage. Everywhere a lively imagination is at work on the Biblical narrative. If the preacher wishes to vindicate human nature against the charge of selfishness, he simply portrays the life of an average man, like scores in his congregation, from boyhood through youth, and through manhood on to old age, and lets the proof of his thesis rest with the portrait. No one who has heard or read the sermon is disposed to doubt the text that "none of us liveth to himself". If time and change be the theme, then again are brought on the imaginary stage the careers of two men—the one successful and the other unsuccessful, as the world views them—with a final justification, when the drama broadens, of God's dealings with His children. Human nature, the preacher may assert, is so inconstant that we can never know what a man will do. The statement may be a commonplace to every one in his congregation; but the commonplace is forgotten in Sterne's illustration of it through a whole series of portraits drawn with a few strokes from his own experience and observation. Sometimes a sermon consists of a single character-sketch rendered in full detail; it may be Job or Herod. Again, for a study in contrast, two characters run along parallel to each other, like Nathan and David, or the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple. Scenes of this kind Sterne, avoiding all abstractions, realised completely and triumphantly. True, the psychology was crude, but so was all the psychology of the age. Complex human nature can not be summed up in Pope's neat doctrine of ruling passions, which was accepted by Sterne. It does not explain Solomon to call him "a reformed sensualist", nor Herod to conclude that ambition was the first spring of his character, which, so to speak, put into motion all the other wheels. But under Sterne's hand the method resulted

in most striking portraits. For setting forth the character of these and other men in Scripture, Sterne frequently impersonated them, spoke as he fancied they must have spoken, giving their points of view, their reasons for their conduct, in conversation or in monologue. In this dramatic manner the man of Jericho, for example, soliloquises for a half page and more after he had been passed by, "friendless and unpitied", by priest and Levite; and the Samaritan paused over the unfortunate traveller for a still longer meditation before deciding to "soften his misfortunes by dropping a tear of pity over them". Everywhere Sterne thus lets his imagination play upon the few details furnished him by Scripture, building up scenes and characters just as Shakespeare knew how to do from an incident or two out of Holinshed. Sometimes, as in "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning", a beautiful allegorical veil hangs over the drama, under which we pass through scenes alternating with joy and sorrow, depicted with perfect art. This dramatic discourse is Sterne's most complete allegory of human life.

Safe to say, no more readable collection of sermons came from the press of the eighteenth century, and none with a clearer stamp of literature upon them.

CHAPTER X

SHANDY HALL. TRISTRAM SHANDY:

VOLUMES III AND IV

JUNE 1760—MAY 1761

TAKING several sets of sermons along with him for friends and subscribers in the north, Sterne left London for York—in his own carriage drawn by his own horses, as we have seen him—on Monday the twenty-sixth of May. Driving leisurely, he should have made his smart entry through Micklegate before nightfall of the following Thursday, in ample time to appear in the pulpit of St. Peter's on Sunday. During his absence, his wife and daughter had occupied lodgings in the Minster Yard. Mrs. Sterne, he found on returning, had recovered from the delusion that she was the Queen of Bohemia, despite sore trouble with the daughter left in her charge. The schoolmates of Lydia, says John Croft, had plagued and taunted her, since her father's book came out, with the name of Miss Tristram and Miss Shandy. In revenge, she wrote love letters to the girls who thus annoyed her, under the signatures of the several players of the York company. As she had anticipated, many of the letters were intercepted by parents and guardians, with the result that the girls were flogged or shut up in dark closets or otherwise severely punished. But as she had not anticipated, the practical joke cast so great a slur on the theatre, that the players were compelled to take up the matter and ferret out the person who was playing fast and loose with their names. The discovery must have thoroughly humiliated Mrs. Sterne, who was always anxious for the good report of her daughter. It was, however, a piece of childish mischief that could not have greatly troubled the author of *Tristram Shandy*.

Before moving out to Coxwold, Sterne remained at York

with his wife and daughter for three weeks for business and recreation. It was incumbent upon him, first of all, to make provision for the spiritual welfare of the parishes which he was leaving for higher preferment. In the case of Sutton, with whose squire he was mostly at variance, he barely fulfilled his obligations. On coming into York for the previous winter, he had placed over that parish one Marmaduke Collier, who stayed on at a salary, as subsequently fixed, of £16 a year and the use of the parsonage house for residence. This cheap curate, who never attained to the dignity of a license, held his office solely on a private arrangement with Sterne as Vicar of Sutton. Much to the vicar's amusement, as well as to the loss of his library and some furniture, Collier eventually ran away, after accidentally setting fire to the parsonage and burning it to the ground. Stillington, the seat of Stephen Croft, naturally fared much better. In charge of this parish was entrusted another Marmaduke—Marmaduke Callis—who had served as minister in other churches in the diocese. On Sterne's formal presentation of his name to the Dean and Chapter of York, Callis received a license to the curacy—after some delay, to be sure—on September 26, 1761; and Sterne generously agreed to pay him an annual stipend of £40, or the entire income of the living.*

There was necessary also some readjustment of the mortgage on the Tindall farm at Sutton, previously held by William Shaw, who, it would appear, had recently died. For by lease and release,† dated the second and third days of June, 1760, Sterne, jointly with John and Timothy Place, linen drapers of the city of London, who appear in later records among heirs to William Shaw, conveyed this property to Elizabeth Thompson, widow, of Holtby, a neighbouring parish. Though the transaction can not be precisely cleared up, it was, without much doubt, a transfer of the Shaw mortgage to Mrs. Thompson. At this time or a little later, the two dwellings and half of the lands which had been assigned to Sterne under the Sutton Enclosure Act, were

* The appointments of Callis and Collier are recorded in the *Institutions* of the Diocese of York.

† Registered at Northallerton.

leased to one Benjamin Shepherd, who also, it is likely, was "the promising tenant" that Sterne found for the Tindall farm two years before. Several other fields from the same award were leased to one Robert Mozeen. All this and other business incident to a change of residence was quickly concluded, and by the middle of June, Sterne had assumed the duties of his new parish.

Coxwold, where Sterne soon brought his family, lies seven or eight miles to the north of Stillington on the edge of the moors. The village straggles up a long and rather steep hill and loses itself at the top as one travels westward towards Thirsk, eight miles away. Well up the hill on the left stands the pretty church of St. Michael, overlooking village and valley; and beyond the church, on the right, close to the roadside, is the house which Sterne used for residence and named Shandy Castle or Shandy Hall. Though now made over into cottages for labourers, it is still, as in Sterne's time, a strange-looking gabled structure, as if it were once a cloister which someone far back turned into a dwelling—low, rambling, and dark, with a huge irregular stone chimney buttressing the eastern end. It is the very house, one would say, with its nooks and corners and surprises, from which should issue a book like *Tristram Shandy*. "A sweet retirement", Sterne called it, where a jaded clergyman might take up his rest. For years he had longed to leave the York valley, which aggravated his cough and asthma. Now he had but to step into the garden at the rear of Shandy Hall, and there lay before him a wide sweep of the Hambleton Hills. He doubtless missed the intimate society of the Crofts; but near-by lived the master of the Coxwold grammar school, and within a mile or two was the seat of Lord Fauconberg, his friend and patron.

Once settled in Shandy Hall, Sterne was ready to proceed rapidly with his book. The main lines that the story was to take had been designed the previous year, and several of the anecdotes, like the birth and the misnaming of the hero, there are reasons for thinking, may have been then written out, but afterwards cut away in order to bring the first two volumes into a compass narrow enough to fit his purse or to

please Dodsley. But anything from Shandy Hall was now sure of a market; and Sterne was so eager to lay a new tax on the public that he sat down to his papers at York before moving over to Coxwold. The new instalment of *Tristram Shandy* was resumed in earnest when he reached his parish; and we may, if we like, easily obtain a few glimpses of him at work through the summer and well on into the autumn. His study, as a visitor enters the narrow hallway of Shandy Castle, was a small room to the right, from the door of which one still looks upon the yawning fireplace of the great stone chimney. By the window stood in Sterne's day a plain deal-table with pen and inkwell, before which the author, in loose slippers and old dressing gown, took his seat in a cane chair, having a back that ran up into ornamental knobs, symbolising, in Sterne's fancy, wit and discretion. Across the table and along the chimney-piece were strewn books which he had brought from his library at Sutton as most useful in composing the new *Shandys*. We can still read the titles of some of them as clearly as if we now saw them. There lay, for instance, *Rabelais* in Ozell's translation, Burton's *Anatomy*, Locke on the *Human Understanding*, and the famous *Textus Roffensis*, containing the solemn anathemas of the Church of Rome. Before Sterne had long been at work, books, table, and floor were spattered with ink, for he was a sloven with his pen, thrusting it nervously into the inkhorn and then dropping it upon himself or upon the floor on the way to his paper. The act of composition was to him a sort of obsession, during the strenuous period of which he imagined a host of quaint demons grinning and clawing at his head and filling the room, just as we see them in old prints. When the fit was on, he could write almost continuously through the day—at will, he used to claim, before meals or after meals, dressed or undressed, clean shaven or in neglected beard. But he was unable to smoke while composing and rarely at other times; "inasmuch as"—he said in reply to a conjecture that humour so "refined" as his must be hatched out by tobacco,—"inasmuch as the fumes thereof do concoct my conceits too fast so that they would be all torn to rags before they could be well served up".* Sometimes, it

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

is a local tradition, Sterne would issue forth from Shandy Hall at a great rate, and half way down the hill would come to a sudden stop, and then rush back to his study to note down some fancy before it could escape him. And so it went on for weeks, until his brains became "as dry as a squeezed orange" and he had "no more conceit in him than a mallet".

Hardly had Sterne set pen to paper this summer, when there arrived a disconcerting note from Warburton, hinting at personal and literary indiscretions the past winter and warning him to be on his guard in the future. The bishop, not exactly divining Sterne's talent, wished him to compose a series of trifles, at once playful and moral, such as could do no harm to their author and might instruct as well as amuse the reader. On receiving Warburton's letter, Sterne felt like throwing aside his manuscripts forever, and falling back into the humdrum duties of a country parson. But that was only a momentary impulse. Quickly regaining his emotional poise, he courteously thanked the bishop for his "kind and most friendly advice", and added: "Be assured, my Lord, that willingly and knowingly I will give no offence to any mortal by anything which I think can look like the least violation either of decency or good manners, and yet, with all the caution of a heart void of offence or intention of giving it, I may find it very hard, in writing such a book as *Tristram Shandy*, to mutilate everything in it down to the prudish humour of every particular. I will, however, do my best—though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too."

Warburton, elated by the reformation of Sterne, hastened to reply: "It gives me real pleasure (and I could not but trouble you with these two or three lines to tell you so) that you are resolved to do justice to your genius, and to borrow no aids to support it, but what are of the party of honour, virtue, and religion. You say you will continue to laugh aloud. In good time. But one who was no more than even a man of spirit would choose to laugh in good company; where priests and virgins may be present. * * * * I would recommend a maxim to you which Bishop Sherlock formerly told me Dr. Bentley recommended to him, that a man was

never writ out the reputation he had once fairly won, but by himself."

In the end, Sterne had only contempt for the advice with which Warburton was pestering him, and made a jest of it in conversation with his friends. No obstacle could stand in the way of his giving free utterance to what his attendant demons suggested to him, irrespective of the censures of the grave. Let his critics say what they might, he would write for that audience, be it great or small, who could be counted on to relish genuine humour. "I shall be attacked and pelted", he wrote to Stephen Croft, "either from cellars or garrets, write what I will—and besides, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds—who either do not—or will not laugh.—'Tis enough if I divide the world;—at least I will rest contented with it." With his mind thus made up, Sterne placed at the head of his manuscript a Latin sentence which he had seen in Ozell's *Rabelais** from John of Salisbury, the great churchman and humanist of the twelfth century. "I have no fear", to paraphrase the Latin as Sterne adroitly modified it to his own purpose, "I have no fear of the opinions of those unskilled in these matters; but pray none the less that they spare my lucubrations, in the which it has ever been my aim to run from the gay to the serious and backwards from the serious to the gay."

The gay mood was to prevail mostly in the new volumes, which, among many things, tell of Mr. Walter Shandy's favourite hypotheses and how his expectations from them come to naught in the misfortunes that befall his son Tristram immediately after birth. Beginning where he had left off the year before, Sterne resumed the evening conversations between the two Shandys and Dr. Slop in the back parlour of the imaginary Shandy Hall, not to be confounded, as has been done so often, with Sterne's own habitation. In a bedroom upstairs lay Mrs. Shandy attended by the parish midwife and Susannah the housemaid. In the kitchen sat a group of idle servants, listening for the cry of a child from

* *Works of Francis Rabelais*, revised by Ozell, vol. I, p. cxx (London, 1737).

above. For some moments there had been a lull in the conversations of the back parlour. Walter Shandy had delivered a formal speech on the dangers that threaten a child's head at birth, and my uncle Toby was whistling Lillabullero in amazement at the alarming narrative, when a tramping was heard overhead near the bedside of Mrs. Shandy. Dr. Slop hurriedly took up his "green bays bag" containing his instruments of torture, but found alas! that Obadiah had tied its mouth in a dozen hard knots for the safety of its precious contents. In vain he tried to unloose the intricate "roundabouts" and "cross turns" which Obadiah had drawn with all the might of his hands and teeth; and then calling in desperation for a penknife to cut them, he thereby cut also his thumb to the bone. Whereupon he began "stamping, cursing and damning at Obadiah at a dreadful rate". My uncle Toby, who had not the heart to curse the devil himself with so much bitterness, suspended his whistling, and Mr. Shandy rebuked the profane doctor for unduly wasting his strength and soul's health by heavy cursing over small accidents. Instead of being so profane on trivial occasions, it would be much better, Mr. Shandy tried to persuade him, for a man who must curse to heed the example of a gentleman of his acquaintance, "who, in distrust of his own discretion, * * * sat down and composed (that is at his leisure) forms of swearing suitable to all cases, from the lowest to the highest provocation that could happen to him, * * * and kept them ever by him on the chimney-piece, within his reach ready for use". Dr. Slop, who had never heard of the ingenious gentleman, became so interested in the anecdote that Mr. Shandy offered to show him a similar document, on condition that he should read it aloud before going upstairs. The doctor readily agreeing, Mr. Shandy forthwith reached up to the chimney-piece and gravely handed the Popish physician an authentic copy of the form of excommunication prepared for the English clergy by Ernulf, a learned Roman Bishop of Rochester in the old days. With wry face over an aching thumb tied up in the corner of his handkerchief, Dr. Slop was compelled to read through the terrible anathema, to the full discovery that it

was not necessary to go outside his own church for an art and a gradation in cursing such as he had never dreamed of. Set beside the old bishop's copious profanity, the most violent oaths hitherto at his command, he was made to see, were tame and insipid, unworthy of the fine of five shillings which the government would inflict upon a gentleman for each petty offence.

His vocabulary of cursing enriched out of Ernulf's digest, Dr. Slop received an urgent summons above stairs from the frightened midwife; and the two Shandys, growing weary over a discourse on time and eternity, fell asleep as they sat in their easy armchairs by the fire. The two tired brothers would have slept on through the night, had they not been awakened by the creak of a rusty door-hinge, announcing the entrance of Trim to inform them that Dr. Slop had come down to the kitchen to make a pasteboard bridge for poor Tristram's broken nose. With a deep and agonising sigh, the grief-stricken father staggered to his feet, extending a hand, as he did so, to my uncle Toby, who led him silently to his bed, where he might best digest his affliction, as everybody knows, by lying flat upon his face, with an arm and leg dangling upon the floor. To understand, says Sterne, why the sad mishap to Tristram caused so great grief in his father, it must be explained that the elder Shandy had staked all on his son's nose. It had long been a settled conviction of his that a long nose, besides being a useful ornament to the face, was also a forecast of character and distinction in life; while a short or flat nose, like the ace of clubs that disfigured the countenance of his great-grandfather, meant as surely misfortunes and disgraces against which no man could ever bear up, whatever might be his other endowments of body or mind.

Mr. Shandy had derived his whimsical notion from wide observation on the rise and fall of the best county families and from a multitude of curious treatises that touched upon the theme. But the one that had been of most profit to him was a learned folio by the German Slawkenbergius, who devoted his life to the philosophy of the nose. Unlike all the other books, this one contained merry tales—a hundred

of them—written out in the purest Latin, to illustrate and enforce the scholar's doctrine in its hundred-fold divisions. Of the two or three tales that Mr. Shandy always read with much delight, Sterne relates one that hinges upon the disorder and confusion caused among the inhabitants of Strassburg by the appearance one summer evening of a stranger who entered their gates, riding upon a mule and guarding with a drawn scimitar an immense nose which he had obtained (so he told the sentinel) at the Promontory of Noses. For some time, says Sterne, there had been no great and vital question in dispute between the Roman Catholic and Protestant universities at Strassburg, but now one of the finest was thrown at their heads. Taking sides, logicians and theologians proved and disproved through long and acrimonious debate, each faculty using its own appropriate jargon, that the stranger's nose was a real nose, that it was only a pasteboard nose, and that it was no nose at all, as if the affair were of as great moment as the altercation which divided the universities over the point in Martin Luther's damnation—whether the founder of Protestantism was damned to all eternity by the conjunction of the planets at his birth, and whether, the affirmative being proven, "his doctrines by direct corollary must be damned doctrines too". Slawkenbergius and his merry folio were, of course, pure fictions elaborated by Sterne for puzzling his learned public. The fanciful allegory of a land where one may purchase noses after his heart, was built up by Sterne mostly from a few hints out of Ozell's *Rabelais*, which lay at his elbow.*

The long digression on Slawkenbergius gave Mr. Shandy time to recover his grief in sufficient measure to converse and use his reason once more. No sooner had he reached that stage than he fell back upon another hypothesis whose aid might be yet invoked to save his son, disfigured and disgraced as he was by Dr. Slop's obstetric hand. For next to a man's nose, the squire held, with the old writers on his shelves, that a man's character and conduct all depend upon the name he happens to bear. Judas, do what he might, could have been only the traitor that he was; whereas Cæsar

* See "the fair of noses" in Ozell's *Rabelais*, I, 317.

and Alexander conquered the world quite as much by the magic of their names as by their valour. *Jack, Dick, and Tom*, "like equal forces acting against each other in contrary directions", he also often affirmed, were neutral or indifferent names, numbering since the world began as many knaves and fools as wise and good men. It had been his intention to call his son *George* or *Edward*, which though not the best names, stood rather high in his estimation as the titles of kings and princes. But to offset the broken nose, it was now necessary to choose the most potent name in his repertory, else his son would grow into a driveller and goose-cap. And so he resolved to christen him after Trismegistus, "the greatest of all earthly beings", whether considered as king, lawyer, philosopher, or priest, for he was all of them and more too.

But wisest fate said no. In the depth of night, while Mr. Shandy lay quietly sleeping, he was awakened by Susannah, who had come to tell him that his son was in convulsions near to the point of death, that Parson Yorick could nowhere be found to baptise him, but that his curate was already in the dressing-room, holding the child upon his arm, black as the ace of spades, and waiting for the name.

"TRISMEGISTUS", said Mr. Shandy, and Susannah ran along the gallery with the name to her mistress's room.

"'Tis *Tris*—something, cried *Susannah*—There is no christian-name in the world, said the curate, beginning with *Tris*—but *Tristram*. Then 'tis *Tristram-gistus*, quoth *Susannah*.

"——There is no *gistus* to it noodle!——'tis my own name, replied the curate, dipping his hand, as he spoke, into the bason—*Tristram!* said he, &c. &c. &c. &c., so *Tristram* was I called, and *Tristram* shall I be to the day of my death."

"Of all names in the universe", Mr. Shandy "had the most unconquerable aversion for *Tristram*." It is a name, he would say, so low and contemptible that it "could possibly produce nothing in *rerum natura* but what was extremely mean and pitiful". Who, he used to ask (ignorant of the *Tristram* of romance), ever read or heard tell of "a man

called *Tristram*, performing anything great or worth recording? No. * * * The thing is impossible''. The next morning Mr. Shandy, as he was making tea with my uncle Toby, heard how Susannah and the curate lost *Trismegistus* between them; took down his hat from the peg, and walked away to meditate alone upon the final stroke of fortune.

There was, however, still one ray of hope, which Yorick, who was summoned for his advice, pointed out to the disconsolate father. Perhaps *Tristram's* name might be changed. At any rate they would all—Mr. Yorick and the two Shandys—attend the next Visitation Dinner at York and lay the matter before the eminent advocates and divines learned in ecclesiastical law. The dinner threatened to break up in hubbub before coming to the question at all; for by some accident a hot chestnut was dropped or poked into the breeches of Phutatorius, who accused Yorick of maliciously placing it there. The riot over the chestnut, however, soon subsided; and Didius, the great church-lawyer, brought forward *Tristram's* baptism for discussion. Mr. Shandy sat and listened to various amusing baptismal stories, learning, in the course of the evening, what made a baptism null and what made it valid in the period before the Reformation, and that in special cases, like the Duchess of Suffolk's, it had been adjudged by the highest courts that the mother may not be of kin to her child. The company at length broke up without determining the cause presented to them. Still, Mr. Shandy felt paid for his visit to the dinner, for never before had his brain been so tickled by the subtleties of dialectic wit.

After the York dinner, the narrative quickly terminated with an account of the squire's project for enclosing the great Ox-moor, followed by the timely death of his eldest son Bobby, making *Tristram* thereby heir-apparent to the Shandy family. The new instalment of *Tristram Shandy* had many correspondences with the performance of the previous year. In both were the same or similar freaks of structure and style. As before, real and fictitious documents were introduced so cleverly that it was hard for the reader to determine the character of the one or the other. Latin and English

stared at each other on opposite pages, as in Pope's *Imitations of Horace*. In the fourth volume a chapter was dropped out and the pagination tampered with. The preface was again thrust in as an intermediate chapter; and a marbled page, which should have been the ornamental lining to a cover, was transferred to the body of the book, as an emblem of its motley character. Local satire and allusion still abounded, though it has now become extremely difficult to uncover most of it. Philip Harland's experiments in farming were gently ridiculed in Mr. Shandy's trouble with the Ox-moor; and from first to last Dr. Burton was crucified to the delight of his enemies. The Visitation Dinner was clearly a reminiscence of that turbulent dinner of the York chapter back in 1751 at George Woodhouse's, when Sterne and the Dean of York confronted Dr. Topham of the prerogative court and silenced him. Doubtless the portraits of several officials and clergymen present on that occasion were once recognisable under the Rabelaisian names that Sterne gave them, like Agelastes, who never laughed at a joke, and Somnolentus, who always slept through one. Dr. Topham surely appeared as Didius and shifted into Phutatorius before the dinner was over; and the hot chestnut which Yorick picked up from the floor after it had traversed the breeches of Phutatorius, not as an insult, but because he thought "a good chestnut worth stooping for", was a ludicrous version of the old controversy over the commissaryship which Dr. Topham first resigned all right to, and afterwards claimed as his own when Sterne was willing to take it. And finally, the story of Tristram's christening may well have been a rendering of a local anecdote over the blunders of curates and sponsors at baptisms, with which the armory of clerical jest had long been filled. Perhaps something like it had occurred in one of Sterne's own parishes.—"Name this child", once said a clergyman at the critical point in a baptism. "Zulphur", responded the godfather. "That", said the clergyman, "is not a name." "Sulphur—Sulphur"—was the only result of another trial to get at the name, and the priest smiled. "He means Zilpah, Leah's

handmaid," suggested the clerk, and the child escaped a worse fate than *Tristram's*.*

It was Sterne's own opinion that the new volumes surpassed the old "in laughable humour", while they contained "an equal degree of Cervantic satire". And he was right, except that his inspiration was not Cervantes so much as Rabelais. His genius was yet to develop in other ways, but in satire he had now reached high water. Never since Rabelais had "the lumber rooms of learning" been so thoroughly overhauled and the learned blockheads dragged out and subjected to so keen a ridicule as in the wordy controversies over the stranger's nose and the points that nullify or make valid a baptism. It may be that some of the satire was misplaced and out of date; but, speaking generally, the old scholastic method of warfare still survived in philosophy and religion. Mr. Shandy was certainly not the last logician to employ the hypothesis as if it carried with it a sort of magic potency. Nor were the Shandy brothers the last men who, while invariably associating different ideas with the same words, have attempted to converse and reason together.

Coming nearer home, Sterne waylaid and pommelled deliciously the connoisseurs in art and criticism; one of whom measured the angles of *Tristram Shandy* with rule and compass, and pronounced it out of all plumb; and another timed Garrick's pauses in Hamlet's soliloquy, without observing the actor's wonderful manner of bridging chasms with eye, attitude, and gesture, for he could not look away from the stopwatch in his hand, he said, if he was to count seconds and their fractions. The gentlemen on the *Monthly Review* and other magazines who had belaboured Sterne for publishing sermons under the name of Mr. Yorick, were singled out for good-natured ridicule. They rumbled, cut, and slashed at Yorick's jerkin unmercifully, he told them; but they did not reach the sarcenet lining, and he still remained unharmed. And as he laid aside his pen, he drank a health to the bigwigs and long-beards who had admitted Yorick's wit but lamented his lack of discretion, asking them to relax a little from their gravity and try him once more. "True *Shan-*

* P. H. Ditchfield, *The Parish Clerk*, 268 (London, 1907).

deism", he assured them, "think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels, makes the wheel of life run long and chearfully round."

The third volume of *Tristram Shandy* was completed on the third day of August, and the fourth in November, after George the Third had begun his "propitious reign". Leaving his parish in charge of an assistant curate, Sterne went up to London alone the week before Christmas to watch his book through the press, which in advance of his coming had been advertised by Dodsley through the autumn in order to hedge off the spurious *Shandys* which were threatening the market. For following Sterne this winter, we have hardly more than four letters to Stephen Croft relative to business with which the squire from time to time entrusted him. Sterne had several pictures copied for his friend, and purchased two prints for him, which, after being lent to Miss Gilbert, daughter of the Archbishop of York, who was south with her father, were duly posted to Stillington Hall. He also sounded the war-office several times on the chance of promotion for Mr. Croft's son Stephen, who held a commission in the army. Fortunately, Sterne could not write on business without writing about himself and his book; so that much may be read in and out of these letters, if we can interpret the allusions and will heed the silences.

On reaching London, Sterne was in high spirits and at once plunged into society with the old zest. Much as last year, he could write after a month of it: "I never dined at home once since I arrived—am fourteen dinners deep engaged just now, and fear matters will be worse with me in that point than better." But beyond the dinners, no two London seasons were ever alike for Sterne. Old friends and old enemies were absent from town or they no longer regarded him, and new ones appeared to applaud or to abuse him. This year he was struck by the great changes that had taken place in "the looks and political reasoning" of the coffee-houses and all the companies he attended. The nation, he found to his surprise, was divided over the German war (as

it was called) into two hostile camps, which he humorously called "Prussians and Anti-Prussians, Butes and Anti-Butes", breaking up the old distinction between Whig and Tory. The winter before it was nothing but Pitt, and none dared question the conduct of the great war-minister. In the meantime the war in Germany had gone disastrously; the loss of life in the field had been terrible; Prince Ferdinand, the hero of a year ago, was calling for forty thousand more men, and for provisions, else his army would starve in a fortnight; officers who should have been with their regiments were loitering about St. James's Coffee-House and Hyde Park; corruption was rampant, and loud complaints were heard of Pitt's "making a trade of the war". George the Second had died in October, and everybody was talking about the boy who had succeeded him. Sterne, like all the rest, closely watched the youth's habits and his policy of peace as it unfolded during the winter. It was a novel sight for him to see on the throne a young man of energy, determined to be a king after the type set forth by Lord Bolingbroke in his *Patriot King*. "The King seems resolved", Sterne wrote to his friends at Stillington, "to bring all things back to their original principles, and to stop the torrent of corruption and laziness. * * * The present system being to remove that phalanx of great people, which stood betwixt the throne and the subjects, and suffer them to have immediate access without the intervention of a cabal——(this is the language of others): however, the King gives everything himself, knows everything, and weighs everything maturely, and then is inflexible——this puts old stagers off their game——how it will end we are all in the dark."

An admirer of Pitt, Sterne had come to London as a Prussian, but he could not hold out against the strong sentiment towards peace and a king who was fast winning the hearts of his people by granting them free access to the palace, and by appearing among them at the theatre and elsewhere. Sterne on one occasion sat in the gallery of the House of Commons through an entire day, waiting for the appearance of Pitt to throw down the gauntlet in defence of the German war; but "a political fit of the gout seized the

great combatant and he entered not the lists''. Instead of the expected speech, Sterne listened to a long and passionate debate, which began and ended with incoherent abuse of all who were crying for peace. A month later, he recorded the break-up of the ministry and the humiliation of Pitt, though his fall was not yet. "The court is turning topsy-turvy", he wrote to Croft, "Lord Bute, le premier——Lord Talbot, to be groom of the chambers in room of the Duke of Rutland——Lord Halifax to Ireland——Sir Francis Dashwood in Talbot's place——Pitt seems unmoved——a peace inevitable——Stocks rise——the peers this moment kissing hands, &c. &c. (this week may be christened the kiss-hands week) for a hundred changes will happen in consequence of these. * * * Pray, when you have read this, send the news to Mrs. Sterne."

Just as the peers were kissing hands, an odd rumour was set going by Sterne's enemies at York that George the Third had forbidden him the Court. He wrote back that Charles Townshend and other friends were very merry over the report, and assured him that he need fear "no accident of that kind". He continued to attend, we may be sure, the king's levees, and in February he was invited to the "grand assembly" of Lady Northumberland, soon to be appointed to her Majesty's bedchamber. The only place where Sterne was not a welcome guest seems to have been the house of Warburton in Grosvenor Square. The bishop professed to have heard from Garrick and Berenger certain stories about "our heteroclite parson" that disabled him from appearing longer "as his friend and well-wisher".* With many of the king's favourites who entered the new ministry or were seen most about the Court, Sterne claimed acquaintance, and with some of them he was in easy social relations. Charles Townshend's appointment as Secretary of War he announced to Stephen Croft a month in advance. If he lost Warburton, he gained in his place John, Viscount Spencer, one of the new peers. This most agreeable nobleman sent him a sil-

* See Warburton's letters to Garrick dated June 16 and June 26, 1760, in *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 117-18 (London, 1831).

ver standish, invited him to Wimbleton, and in all ways befriended him as a patron should. It was a close friendship that continued to the end. Lord Spencer, however, was not a man to exert any restraint upon Sterne's conduct; while Warburton, humbug as he was, did care for the conventions of the cloth and tried to keep Sterne within their bounds.

Warburton's influence gone, Sterne soon drifted with the tide of fashion and social dissipation. In running through the list of the king's friends, one is amazed to find there, John Wilkes excepted, the leading Monks of the disbanded Medmenham Abbey and other men whose lives were equally notorious. Sir Francis Dashwood, treasurer of the Chambers, and subsequently Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the founder of the profligate order; and a former member, George Bubb Dodington, who still kept up a semblance of the brotherhood at his Hammersmith villa, was created Baron Melcombe of Melcombe Regis. Sterne made the acquaintance of Wilkes the year before, and now fell in with his compeers. One morning he breakfasted with Robert Vansittart, recorder of Monmouth,—the Monk who brought to the abbey the baboon to which Sir Francis was wont to administer the eucharist. Sterne's name was also associated by John Croft with a pair of wits of the same general stamp—Samuel Foote, the clever actor and playwright, and Francis Drake Delaval, an amateur actor, then a member of Parliament for Andover. Foote, who had just produced the *Minor* at the Haymarket, was at the height of his popularity, and Delaval was soon to be created a Knight of the Bath. About the two men, who were inseparable, many scandalous stories were in circulation. With no danger of break in their friendship, Delaval married Foote's mistress. Ten years after Sterne first knew them, Delaval was found one morning dead on the floor of his room, with an empty bottle of usquebaugh lying by his side. "It is therefore supposed", said the newspapers naïvely in recording the sudden death, "that he had got up in the night to get something to drink". His body being opened by the physicians, "his stomach appeared in a very inflamed state". No doubt it would have

been better for Sterne and some aspects of his art, had he never known and associated with these men or their like; but it is just, as well as charitable, to suppose that he was drawn to them, not by their immorality, in which there is no evidence of his sharing, but by their extraordinary wit and good fellowship—qualities which attracted even Dr. Johnson to Vansittart. They were the fine gentlemen of the period.

Amid the earlier engagements of the season, Sterne had the proofs of his book to revise in the morning. It was his custom to make minor changes at the last moment, “pricking in the lights”, so to speak, in modern phrase. This year there was some question about Slawkenbergius on noses, which, a reader will observe, is so placed that it could be cut out with a little readjustment of the text before or after the tale. Stephen Croft, who had acted as Sterne’s adviser during the period of composition, objected to Slawkenbergius, probably on the ground that as a story it ran upon an equivocation too long drawn out to pass muster. Twice he remonstrated with Sterne by letter after the author had reached London. From Sterne’s first reply, it seems quite likely that he met his friend’s objection by shifting the emphasis of the episode from equivocation to a satire on misplaced and futile learning. Be this as it may, Sterne had decided to let Slawkenbergius stand, for his friends in London had read the manuscript and approved. In high spirits he then wrote to Stephen Croft: “As to the main points in view, at which you hint—all I can say is, that I see my way, and unless Old Nick throws the dice—shall, in due time, come off the winner,—Tristram will be out the twentieth—there is a great rout made about him before he enters the stage—whether this will be of use or no, I can’t say—some wits of the first magnitude here, both as to wit and station, engage me success—time will shew.”

Heralded by wits and coffee-houses, the second instalment of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, comprising the third and fourth volumes of the work, issued from Dodsley’s press—a week later than the author had expected—on Wednesday the twenty-eighth of January,

1761, in company with a new edition of the first two volumes. It contained, as if to frighten away over-violent criticism, compliments to Reynolds as an easy and graceful painter, and to "my dear friend *Garrick*, whom I have so much cause to esteem and honour". Pitt was alluded to in the "statesman turning the political wheel * * * against the stream of corruption"; and Mr. Shandy spoke of the glory and honour surrounding the names of the young king and the Duke of York, of whom the latter had noticed Sterne the preceding May. On the other hand, Warburton was dealt a covert thrust in the reference to a bishop who complained of being splashed by Yorick's horse. Hogarth and Ravenet his engraver were again called in for a frontispiece, representing the scene in Mrs. Shandy's dressing-room the moment after Yorick's curate had christened Tristram by the wrong name. The *London Magazine*, then the semi-official organ of the ministry, very properly inserted a congratulatory note in its January issue, saying: "At length the *real*, the inimitable Shandy, again makes his appearance, and all the host of impotent criticks and imitators look agast, at his superior genius. Whoever of our readers have, with true relish read his former volumes, may be assured that their perusal of the third and fourth will not be attended with less delight."

But Sterne's friends among the great availed not with the professional critics, or with a large section of the public. Horace Walpole, writing to a Yorkshire parson early in March, observed by the way: "The second and third volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, the dregs of nonsense, have universally met the contempt they deserve: genius may be exhausted;—I see that folly's invention may be so too."* Outside the *London Magazine*, the author and his book were everywhere denounced in print. The *Monthly Review*, for example, in its March number, apologised for all that it had ever said in favour of the first volumes, and then proceeded to read Sterne a lecture on the proprieties and the art of writing one's self out. The publication of a book like *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne was told, might be only venial in a

* *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, V, 32.

Foote, who professed to write nothing but farces, but no act could be more reprehensible in a dignitary of the Church. "Do for shame, Mr. Shandy, hide your jerkin, or, at least, send the lining to the scowerer's." "But your Indiscretion, good Mr. Tristram", to go on with the address to Sterne, "is not all we complain of in the volumes now before us. We must tax you with what you will dread above the most terrible of all imputations—nothing less than DULLNESS. Yes, indeed, Mr. Tristram, you are dull, *very dull*. Your jaded Fancy seems to have been exhausted by two pigmy octavos, which scarce contained the substance of a twelve-penny pamphlet. * * * Your characters are no longer striking and singular. We are sick of your uncle Toby's wound in his groin; we have had enough of his ravelines and breast-works: in short, we are quite tired with his *hobby horses*; and we can no longer bear with Corporal Trim's insipidity." Nothing in the book entertained the reviewer, except Ernulf's "extraordinary anathema", which Sterne had probably purloined, it was charged, from some old newspaper or magazine.

The *Critical Review* for April, though in the main milder in tone and appreciative here and there, likewise read Sterne a philosophical essay on the different kinds of humour, down to the bastard forms he was practising in imitation of Rabelais. Like his brother on the *Monthly Review*, this critic claimed that Sterne had lost his audience, but he explained it differently. There was really, in his view, no marked difference between Sterne's two performances. "One had merit", he said, "but was extolled above its value; the other has defects, but is too severely decried." *Slawkenbergius's Tale*, for instance, shows that Mr. Sterne can write Latin "with elegance and propriety", and in other places he displays "taste and erudition". The trouble has really been with the public, it was the reviewer's opinion, who, having once gorged itself with *Tristram Shandy*, could stand no more without "nausea and indigestion". "All novel readers", to quote him exactly, "from the stale maiden of quality to the snuff-taking chambermaid, devoured the first part with a most voracious swallow, and rejected the last

with marks of loathing and aversion. We must not look for the reason of this difference in the medicine, but in the patient to which it was administered."

These outrageous attacks no one will take over-seriously, for their animus is too apparent for that. The offence that the reviewers took at the immoralities of *Tristram Shandy* was mere humbug, for their own magazines and newspapers spoke at times a more vulgar language than Sterne's at its worst. Sterne had chastised the reviewers because they censured him for publishing sermons under the name of Yorick, the king's jester; and they were but repaying him in the same kind. There was not much more in it than this. If they had hitherto only rumpled his jerkin, they would show him that they could, when they wished, slash the lining. Sterne, as usual, professed indifference to them at first. Just as the storm was breaking over his head, he wrote to Stephen Croft: "One half of the town abuse my book as bitterly, as the other half cry it up to the skies—the best is, they abuse and buy it, and at such a rate, that we are going on with a second edition, as fast as possible." But when the storm rose to its fury, Sterne became excited also. "If my enemies knew", he then wrote again to Croft, "that by this rage of abuse and ill-will, they were effectually serving the interests both of myself, and works, they would be more quiet—but it has been the fate of my betters, who have found, that the way to fame, is like the way to heaven—through much tribulation—and till I shall have the honour to be as much maltreated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble; for I have not filled up the measure of half their persecutions."

For many readers Sterne's wit had no doubt lost its freshness, but so far as one can see, there was no immediate decline, as his enemies would have it, in the sale of *Shandy*, of which the second edition appeared on the twenty-first of May. Sterne was still the vogue as much as ever, only in a different set. "Where I had one friend", he said, "last year to do me honour, I have three now." And every new friend, it is implied, meant a new reader. In March his fine portrait by Reynolds was placed on public exhibition by

the Society of Artists. As last year, the garreteers accompanied his progress with books and pamphlets, of which the most pretentious was *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet*, a faithful and humble copy of Sterne's first instalment down to the Greek motto, paper, print, size and number of volumes, with an uncle Dick for my uncle Toby. The author of *Explanatory Remarks upon Tristram Shandy* found an audience for a second part in continuation; and another wit outdid Sterne's oddities by publishing *A Book without a Title-page*. Tristram Shandy also gave his name to a new country-dance, to a soup and a salad which could be had at the coffee-houses, and to a game of cards "in which the knave of hearts, if hearts are trumps, is supreme, and nothing can resist his power".

From the jests of scribblers, the transition is most abrupt to the last sight we get of Sterne in London for this year. *Lloyd's Evening Post* for Monday the fourth of May contained the following news-item:

"Yesterday morning a charity sermon was preached at the Chapel, belonging to the Foundling Hospital for the support of the children maintained and educated in the said hospital, by the Rev. Mr. Sterne, to a numerous audience, several of whom were persons of distinction, and a handsome collection was made for the further support of that charity."

This was Sterne's first and only appearance in a London pulpit. The Foundling Hospital, situated in Guilford street, was then a fashionable charity numbering among its numerous patrons many of the nobility. Peers, it is said, had stood as godfathers to deserted children in the Chapel of St. Andrew's where Sterne officiated; Handel had frequently performed there, and on the walls hung portraits and other paintings by Hogarth, Reynolds, and their contemporaries, as gifts to the foundation. For several years the hospital had been scandalously mismanaged, and the last Parliament had revised its charter. It was a tribute to Sterne's popularity, if nothing more, for the new board of governors to turn to him as a preacher who would attract a large and generous congregation. It so happened that the new treasurer, George Whatley—known in America for his association

and correspondence with Franklin—was acquainted with Yorick; and to him accordingly fell the duty of inviting “Dr. Sterne”, as he was sometimes called, to take the annual charity sermon. After repeated promises, Sterne fixed the Sunday in a characteristic note, dated March 25, 1761, which he sent over to Whatley’s lodgings in Lothbury:

“On April the fifth, 1751, and sure as the day comes, and as sure as the Foundling Hospital stands, will I—— (that is, in case I stand myself) discharge my conscience of my promise in giving you, not a half hour (not a poor half hour), for I never could preach so long without fatiguing both myself and my flock to death—but I will give you a short sermon, and flap you in my turn:—preaching (you must know) is a theologic flap upon the heart, as the dunning for a promise is a political flap upon the memory:—both the one and the other is useless where men have *wit enough* to be honest. This makes for my hypothesis of wit and judgment. I believe you to have both in a great degree, and therefore I am, with great esteem and truth, your’s,

“Laurence Sterne.

“P.S. I will take care to be walking under some colonnade, in or about the Hospital, about a quarter before eleven.”*

But Sterne did not tread the round of the hospital colonnades on that Sunday morning in April, owing either to ill health or to social engagements. It took still another month to bring him up to the sticking-point; and then he appeared on the first Sunday of May, his coming announced by the newspapers. The politicians, wits, and men of fashion with whom Sterne had intimately associated for four months, one may be certain, came to see how the author of *Tristram Shandy* would conduct himself in his clerical gown. Yorick took for his theme the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, on the text “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead”. It was a sermon of attitudes, pauses, and para-

* This letter, from the original in possession of J. T. Rudd, was published in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for August, 1806. In the issue for the preceding March, Rudd gave an account of George Whatley.

doxes, which must have amused here and there his friends looking for Shandean eccentricity. The preacher put an imaginary speech into the mouth of a messenger from heaven calling upon his hearers to part with the vices that bring only death and misery to their doors, and addressed the Almighty directly on the distinctions between the rich and the poor, asking Him what they all meant, and then answering the question himself in the assurance that each man's case shall sometime be reconsidered by a just God, as the Rich Man of the parable found out to his pain. By the way Sterne admonished his "dear auditors" against "the treachery of the senses", and exhorted them "to be temperate and chaste, and just and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another". At times the orator rose to a degree of pathetic eloquence, as in his appeal for alms "in behalf of those who know not how to ask it for themselves". In closing, his voice became husky; and his audience should have wept in response to his final invitation for tears.

It was not a great sermon; indeed it hardly equalled the one Sterne preached before the charity schools of York in the days of his obscurity; but it was in a measure successful. The treasurer of the hospital reported to the managers a contribution amounting to fifty-five pounds, nine shillings, and two pence.*

* The minutes of the Foundling Hospital contain two entries with reference to the sermon. On Wednesday, April 29, it was ordered:

"That a paragraph be inserted in the Daily Papers that a Charity Sermon will be preached in the Chapel of this Hospital on Sunday next by the Revd. Mr. Sterne."

The paragraph appeared in the *Public Advertiser* of Saturday, May 2.

On Wednesday, May 6, the entry reads:

"The Treasurer reported that the Collection at the Anthem in the Chapel last Sunday, amounted to £55. 9. 2."

CHAPTER XI

SHANDY HALL CONTINUED TRISTRAM SHANDY: VOLUMES V AND VI

JUNE 1761—JANUARY 1762

It was well on in June before Sterne took his seat in the coach for York. On the road between Stilton and Stamford, he got a fright, if we are to interpret *Shandy* literally, at the reckless driving of the postillion down a three-mile slope; and, thrusting his head out of the window, he vowed to “the great God of day” that he would lock up his study door the moment he reached home and throw the key into his draw-well at the back of Shandy Hall. Merely stopping at York, he hurried on to his family at Coxwold. During the first weeks after his arrival he was, in contrast with the summer before, ill at ease in his parish. “The transition from rapid motion to absolute rest”, he complained in a letter to Hall-Stevenson, then in London, “was too violent.—I should have walked about the streets of York ten days, as a proper medium to have passed through, before I entered upon my rest.—I staid but a moment, and I have been here but a few, to satisfy me I have not managed my miseries like a wise man.” The weather, too, was “cold and churlish” on the moors, as if it were “bleak December”. His wife, piqued perhaps, as she had right to be, at his long absence, received him coolly, declaring herself happier without him. “O Lord!” he cried out half-seriously in his desolation, “O Lord! now are you going to Ranelagh to-night, and I am sitting, sorrowful as the prophet was, when the voice cried out to him and said, ‘What dost thou here, Elijah?’—” ’Tis well the spirit does not make the same at Coxwold—for unless for the few sheep left me to take care of, in this wilderness, I might as well, nay better, be at Mecca.”

The mood of discontent, not quite genuine, quickly passed.

Husband and wife came to an understanding, and Sterne resumed his parish duties with unwonted zeal, preaching, I take it, regularly every Sunday. This year or the preceding, the parson received, it used to be said at Coxwold, a summons to the death-bed of a poor widow on the outskirts of his parish; and after administering to her the last sacrament, he enquired what she intended to leave him in her will for his trouble. "Alas! Sir", answered the distressed woman, "I am too wretched to give a legacy even to my own relations." "That excuse", replied Yorick, "shall not serve me. I insist upon inheriting your two children, and, in grateful return for the bequest, I will take such care of them that they shall feel as little as possible the loss of an affectionate and worthy mother." "The expiring parent", concludes the anecdote, "at once comforted and surprised, assented; and Sterne religiously kept his promise." Whether the incident be true or not, it is interesting to get this traditional view of Sterne's kindness to his parishioners.* Sometime during the summer, he drew up a plan for re-seating his church, in the manner of a cathedral, that there might be "better sound" and "better light". The plan was submitted to Richard Chapman, the steward of Newburgh Priory, who sent it, with detailed comments, to Lord Fauconberg, then in London, for approval or disapproval. On the day of the king's coronation, the twenty-second of September, Sterne entertained his entire parish and all the country-side. The story of it was told by Mr. Chapman in his letter to the Earl of Fauconberg under date of September the twenty-fifth:

"I am extremely obliged to your lordship for the coronation news, and am glad your lordship got excused from attending, which might have been of bad consequence. Here a fine ox with his horns gilt was roasted whole in the middle of the town, after which the bells put in for church, where an excellent sermon was delivered extempory on the occasion by Mr. Sterne, and gave great content to every hearer. The church was quite full, both quire and aisle, to the very door. The text, &c., you will see both in the London and York papers. About three o'clock the ox was cut up and dis-

* *Yorkshire Notes and Queries*, June, 1904.

tributed amongst at least three thousand people, after which two barrels of ale was distributed amongst those that could get nearest to 'em. Ringing of bells, squibs and crackers, tar-barrels and bonfires, &c., and a ball in the evening, concluded the joyful day.”*

Sterne paid for the ox and perhaps for the ale out of his own pocket. His extemporary sermon, which had been carefully written out, dealt historically with the Church in England under Divine Providence, from the time God sent the Romans into Britain to open a pathway for the Gospel, and “*then put his hook into their nostrils* and led these wild beasts of prey back again into their own land”, down through the dark days of Popery to the Reformation, and on to the final deliverance of the kingdom from “the arts of Jesuitry” in the reign just ended. In conclusion the preacher exhorted his hearers to be loyal to King George the Third, and to live pure and sinless lives, that “the great and mighty God” might never have reason for withdrawing his mercies from the chosen people.

Earlier in the summer there had been some delay in beginning *Shandy* again. In July Sterne bought “seven hundred books at a purchase dog cheap”, in consequence of which his study was topsy-turvy for a week before he could get them set up. He seems to have been thinking, too, of further preferment in the Church, for he wrote a *clerum*, or the Latin sermon preliminary to the degree of Doctor of Divinity; but he went no further, owing, it may be surmised, to the death in August of the Archbishop of York. Dr. Gilbert, and his daughter, who, it is said, really ruled the diocese, were both most friendly to Sterne. The new archbishop, Robert Hays Drummond, who was translated from Salisbury, also proved to be well disposed to him, but the election was not yet, and the favour of the new archbishop could not yet be counted on. Once started, Sterne went on with *Shandy* with more than his usual pace. On the tenth of August he arrived at the story of Tristram’s accident; by the first of September he was already in the fifth book; and by the close

* *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections* * * * presented to Parliament by Command of his Majesty, II, 188-89 (London, 1903).

of October he may have been at the end. For nearly three months he worked steadily, amid the quiet of domestic scenes such as were never to return to him at Shandy Hall. Just as the conclusion was in sight, he wrote to a friend who had sent him belated congratulations on his appointment to Coxwold by the Earl of Fauconberg: "My new habitation * * * is within a mile of his Lordship's seat and park. 'Tis a very agreeable ride out in the chaise I purchased for my wife.—Lyd has a pony which she delights in.—Whilst they take these diversions, I am scribbling away at my Tristram. These two volumes are, I think, the best.—I shall write as long as I live, 'tis, in fact, my hobby-horse; and so much am I delighted with my uncle Toby's imaginary character, that I am become an enthusiast.—My Lydia helps to copy for me—and my wife knits, and listens as I read her chapters."

At the outset of his work, Sterne was uncertain, any reader may see, as to the course his story was to run. Rabelais still rested at his elbow for hints, and Burton's *Anatomy*, I fear, lay wide open in front of him. Relying too much upon them and other books to awaken his fancy, he did not start out well in his first chapter, which opened with a riddle and closed with direct appropriations from Burton on "the reliicks of learning" and on man as "the *miracle* of nature". The fragment on whiskers, which followed, was an elaborate *double entendre*, likewise pieced out of Burton, with the aid of the article on Margaret of Valois in Bayle's *Dictionary*, perhaps one of his seven hundred new books from London. The episode was skilfully stitched together, to be sure; but it was after all only a *double entendre*, without the brilliant satirical colouring of the chapter on noses, which it was intended to duplicate. From the old conversations in the parlour of Shandy Hall, Dr. Slop dropped out, except as he waddled through on his way to bind up Tristram's wound and to quarrel with Susannah. With Dr. Slop gone and Yorick put into his place, the butt of Sterne's satire went also. In consequence of this, the narrative moved on heavily for some pages through Mr. Shandy's philosophical lament over the death of Bobby, which came straight out of Burton. Matters began to mend,

however, when Sterne reached the story of Tristram's accident in the sashed window, which is one of Sterne's best anecdotes of that kind. All of Mr. Shandy's carefully laid plans for his son's physical welfare having now miscarried, through successive blunders of physician, curate, and housemaid, nothing remained for him but to try a new system of education upon Tristram, in the hope of making a prodigy of him. To this end he wrote a *Tristra-paedia* in rivalry with Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, descriptive of the training which Cyrus the Great was supposed to pass through to the rule of the East. Forgetting his books at this point, Sterne passed in review, with excellent ridicule, a young man's career at school and university, as exemplified in his own experience, out to the theory that a short cut to knowledge—a Northwest Passage, so to speak,—might be opened through skilful practice in manipulating the auxiliary verbs. That scheme for the quick multiplication of ideas pleased Corporal Trim and my uncle Toby also, for some of the bravest men, they said, that they had ever fought by the side of in the Low Countries, were auxiliaries.

Still, in spite of many good things, Sterne knew instinctively that he could not continue longer on the oddities of Mr. Shandy, and escape the danger of writing himself out, as his critics intimated that he had done already. He therefore passed to the kitchen of Shandy Hall and over to my uncle Toby's bowling green for a set of characters not yet so far exhausted. Sterne's wit was always whimsical, but he never rendered the supreme charm and delicacy possible to the whim until he placed my uncle Toby before his toy fortifications on the bowling green, gazette in hand, giving Corporal Trim directions for attacking and winning the last town that Marlborough had entered in triumph. "When the *chamade* was beat, and the corporal helped my uncle up it, and followed with the colours in his hand, to fix them upon the ramparts—Heaven! Earth! Sea!—but what avails apostrophes?—with all your elements, wet or dry, ye never compounded so intoxicating a draught."

Sterne had employed gesture, too, in the delineation of character, beyond the skill of most humourists; but he never

attained to the full scope and meaning of it until he let the corporal discourse on life and death, standing amid a motley group in the kitchen, who had just heard that Master Bobby would never return from his travels:

“ ‘Are we not here now,’ continued the corporal, (striking the end of his stick perpendicularly upon the floor, so as to give an idea of health and stability)——* * * * ‘and are we not’——(dropping his hat plumb upon the ground—and pausing, before he pronounced the word)——‘gone! in a moment?’ The descent of the hat was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it.——Nothing could have expressed the sentiment of mortality, of which it was the type and fore-runner, like it,——his hand seemed to vanish from under it,——it fell dead,——the corporal’s eye fixed upon it, as upon a corps,——and *Susannah* burst into a flood of tears.’”

Sterne was a sentimentalist, readers of this memoir need hardly be told, from the time he took hartshorn to bear up against the absence of Miss Lumley; but outside of some of his sermons, his pathos had been kept well in abeyance except for an occasional passage, like my uncle Toby’s fly or the death of poor Yorick. He was now reworking the old vein and refining it to pure gold. No humour could be gentler and more winning than Trim’s catechism, or my uncle Toby’s lament over the Peace of Utrecht, or the story of Le Fever, a poor lieutenant, like Sterne’s own father, who fell ill on the route to join his regiment in Flanders and lay near death at the village inn. My uncle Toby, though Le Fever was a stranger to him, felt so keenly for the distress of a brother officer that he could not sleep o’ nights or bear for a moment the thought of his dying. One evening, as Trim was putting his master to bed, he told him that it was all over with the poor soul, who would never march again, but must surely die. “He will march; said my uncle *Toby*, rising up from the side of the bed, with one shoe off: * * * marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,——he shall march to his regiment. * * * He shall not die, by G——, cried my uncle *Toby*.”

“The ACCUSING SPIRIT”, Sterne commented famously,

“which flew up to heaven’s chancery with the oath, blush’d as he gave it in;—and the RECORDING ANGEL, as he wrote it down, dropp’d a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.”

The better part of these volumes was thus written under the clear and full inspiration of Sterne’s genius. “Ask my pen”, he says, why I write these details about Le Fever and my uncle Toby,—“it governs me—I govern not it”. True, he has been accused of stealing my uncle Toby’s oath, but I can not run down the theft, and think some mistake has been made about it. Certain parallels or analogies to it lie imbedded in the so-called *exempla* of mediæval divines and moralists, but the search leads no further. Richard Rolle of Hampole, a hermit and author of the fourteenth century, for example, tells the story of a canon who was to be damned, it was supposed, because of imperfect repentance. A scholar wrote down his sins and gave the record of them to the abbot, who found them all blotted out, and the parchment as white and clean as if ink had never defiled it. Sterne’s idea lay in this and other *exempla*, some of which he had met with in his reading; but the beauty, the charm, and the humour of it, he alone knew how to render grandly.

In the quiet and chastened humour that ruled Sterne while sporting with pathos, his old enemies on the reviews escaped the usual long tirades. They were nevertheless not quite forgotten here and there. Sterne likened them, in beginning his sixth book, to a line of uncurried and forlorn jackasses, who viewed and reviewed him as he was passing over the rivulet of a little valley; “and when we climbed over that hill, and were just getting out of sight—good God! what a braying did they all set up together!” For the benefit of those who complained that they could not follow him through his digressions, he plotted the curves of his narrative, writing his own name beneath as the engraver. And for the moralists who feared contamination, he printed rows of stars in place of suppressed passages, and left one entire page blank, on which they might write what they pleased, to the end that his book should have at least one page “which MALICE will not blacken, and which IGNORANCE can-

not misrepresent". Expressive of his general aim and bespeaking the indulgence of his public, he placed at the head of each volume, beneath the usual title, two Latin quotations (afterward increased to three), one from Horace and one from Erasmus, taken not from the originals, but as he found them slightly changed in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*.* Speaking with Erasmus through Burton, he asked that his readers distinguish between his character as clergyman and his rôle as jester. "If any one", to paraphrase the Latin, "objects that my book is too light and fantastic for a divine or too satirical for a Christian, let him remember that 'tis not I but Democritus who has spoken." While the book was in making, Sterne sent a draft of the story of Le Fever (as far as the second paragraph of the thirteenth chapter) to Lady Spencer, with comments thereon in his own hand, as a step towards inscribing that part of his work to her Ladyship, and the two volumes as a whole to her husband, John, Lord Viscount Spencer.

In anticipation of Sterne's coming to London to superintend the publication of his book, the scribblers, expecting something of the old order, had been unusually busy. Not without wit—coarse, it is true—was a shilling pamphlet which appeared late in October under the title: *A Funeral Discourse occasioned by the much lamented Death of Mr. Yorick, Prebendary of Y * * k, * * * preached before a very mixed Society of Jemmies, Jessamies, Methodists and Christians, at a Nocturnal Meeting in Petticoat Lane, on a text to be found in "the first chapter of the Gospel of the Jemmies, otherwise called the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, at the words: Alas Poor Yorick!"* The preacher told his congregation that the report current that Mr. Sterne was now living and writing the fifth and sixth volumes of *Shandy* was false. It is barely possible, he added in explanation of his jest, that the animal Sterne may still be alive, but the spiritual Sterne, all his wit and fancy, died with *Slawkenbergius's Tale* and passed into oblivion. The pamphlet was dedicated to "the Right Honourable, the Lord F——g and

* *Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited by A. R. Shilleto, I, 138 (London, 1903).

the very facetious Mr. Foote''. In a footnote it was said with reference to Sterne's intimacy with Archbishop Gilbert, then dead a few months: "The late arch-bishop of York, Dr. G * * * * t of leaden memory, used to say, that he was so delighted with the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* that he read them once every six weeks." At the heels of Yorick's *Funeral*, came *An Admonitory Letter addressed to the Rev. Mr. S—*, * * * by a Layman, in wild censure of Mr. Sterne's literary morals; and *The Life and Amours of Hafen Slawkenbergius*, purporting to be the tale which Yorick had half promised in his fourth volume but had left untold. It was intimated, curiously enough, by the *Critical Review*, that Sterne bore a hand in some of these pamphlets, sending them forth, so to speak, as an advance guard to herald his approach.

Unaware of what awaited him, Sterne must have come up to London towards the end of November, a month before his custom; for the third instalment of *Tristram Shandy*—the fifth and sixth volumes—was advertised for Monday, December 21, 1761, though it bore the date of the new year. In this interval, while the author was correcting printers' blunders and improving his style in general, occurred the only meeting that ever took place between Sterne and Dr. Johnson. "In a company where I lately was", the lexicographer is reported to have said to a group of friends, "Tristram Shandy introduced himself; and Tristram Shandy had scarcely sat down, when he informed us that he had been writing a Dedication to Lord Spencer; and *sponte suâ* he pulled it out of his pocket; and *sponte suâ*, for nobody desired him, he began to read it; and before he had read half a dozen lines, *sponte meâ*, sir, I told him it was not English, sir."* The scene of the encounter seems to have been the Old Cheshire Cheese Tavern, where Dr. Johnson was sitting with Goldsmith or Boswell.† The lexicographer's criticism, it has been supposed, was heeded; and thus by the irony of fate Dr. Johnson became, if not an actual corrector, at

* The *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, Dec., 1818 (vol. X, p. 389).

† *Notes and Queries*, tenth series, vol. V, 108.

least a contributor to the good English of a man whom he despised. But Sterne, I fancy, let the dedication stand as it had been written, loose and ungrammatical as it was in structure from the Johnsonian point of view, and yet clear and beautiful to one who reads for the meaning and not to parse the sentences.

Sterne's early arrival in London was made imperative by the loss of his publisher. During the summer some misunderstanding had arisen between him and Dodsley, the cause of which one can only conjecture, as no scrap of their correspondence over it is known to be extant. The last instalment of *Tristram Shandy*, after its first great run was over, had not sold well, for there had been no edition since the one in May. Sterne, in his disappointment, laid the blame, I take it, upon Dodsley rather than upon the public. Be this as it may, author and publisher parted company in October, when Sterne took the unusual course of advertising his fifth and sixth volumes in the London newspapers without a publisher's name. Not till well on in December did any of these announcements bear the name of "T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt", at the sign of Tully's Head in the Strand, to whom Sterne transferred his patronage and remained faithful to the last. The firm, however, did not immediately purchase the copyright. Four thousand sets were printed at Sterne's expense, and Becket was to sell them on commission.

Under the new management, the price of the set was reduced from five to four shillings, and advance copies were widely distributed to the press without much direct advertising. No great difficulty could have been encountered in matching exactly Dodsley's paper and type, so that the new volumes should present to the eye the same look as the old. But the change of publisher was attended with one inconvenience. Every season spurious works in danger of being thought Sterne's were placed on the market by unscrupulous booksellers. Last January it was *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet*. Now it was another *Slawkenbergius*, which was timed to appear on the same day with *Tristram Shandy*, as a sort of supplement to be bound with it. Equally

impudent was *The Life and Adventures of Christopher Wagstaffe, Gentleman*,—"a lively and facetious imitation of Mr. Sterne's famous performance",—the hero of which claimed to be, in allusion to Sterne's plagiarisms from John Dunton, a grandfather of *Tristram Shandy*. So long as Sterne's books carried the imprint of Dodsley, there was no good reason for anybody's being deceived by the imitators and forgers; but the case was quite different when Becket became his publisher. As a natural, though perhaps not quite necessary, precaution, Sterne went through the labour of inscribing his name in each set, usually near the top of the first page to the right, after the dedication to Lord Spencer. The signature caused here and there a smile or jest, for the last author to make use of this device, it so happened, was "the ingenious Mrs. Constantia Phillips" of scandalous memory.

Critics and moralists who had been lying in wait to pounce upon Sterne once more, were taken aback when they saw him step forth in a new and unsuspected character. Some of them, to be sure, who did not read the volumes, fell into the old abusive tone. A week after their appearance, Warburton, for example, who could scarcely have seen them, fired his parting shot at Sterne in a letter from Prior-Park to his friend Richard Hurd, afterwards Bishop of Worcester:

"Sterne has published his fifth and sixth Volumes of *Tristram*. They are wrote pretty much like the first and second; but whether they will restore his reputation as a writer with the publick, is another question.—The fellow himself is an irrecoverable scoundrel."*

No one who read agreed with Warburton. Garrick and other friends told Sterne that his "thought of the accusing spirit flying up to heaven's chancery with the oath" was sublime. The *Admonitory Letter* to which I have referred was declared by Sterne's old enemy on the *Critical Review* to be "founded on misapprehension". The critic was compelled, as a matter of business, to point out Mr. Sterne's gross

* *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends*, 335 (London, 1809).

faults and obligations to Rabelais; but my uncle Toby's oath, though a conceit, must be pronounced "a conceit of genius". Even the *Monthly Review*,* so bitter last year and still bitter enough, found the new instalment superior to all the rest, and printed entire the death of Le Fever as showing wherein lay Mr. Sterne's great excellence. Indeed, the story of Le Fever, it has been said, was copied into all the magazines and newspapers of the kingdom. Though the statement is not quite true, it nevertheless circulated very widely in this way. The *London Chronicle* set the ball rolling in its issue of December 19-22, and subsequently gave the passage describing "Corporal Trim's Manner of Saying his Catechism". *St. James's Chronicle* for December 22-24 included quotations from it in an appreciation covering nearly three columns. And so we might go on to the *London Magazine* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* for January, and to other periodicals of the winter which helped to spread Sterne's good fame farther than it had yet gone.

At this time, Sterne was taken "very ill". He had come to London, says his dedication to Lord Spencer, in "bad health", which he attributed to hard writing, combined with preaching through the summer. The design of going abroad for a long rest was then in his mind, but he could not quite see his way to it on account of the expense—unless he could find a bear to lead round Europe. His serious illness—he again broke a vessel in his lungs—settled the question for him. As France and England were still nominally at war, though the fighting had ended, Sterne could obtain no passport for his safety. Somewhat concerned, he appealed to Pitt, who gave him letters to members of the French ministry, behaving, says Sterne, "in every respect to me like a man of good breeding and good nature". The Archbishop of York "most humanely" granted him a leave of absence; Garrick lent him twenty pounds, which was not repaid for several years, if ever; and towards the end of the second week in January, Sterne started across the Channel in a race with death. The first intelligence of him that came back to London was the

* *Monthly Review*, Feb., 1762; *Critical Review*, April, 1762.

following item in the *London Chronicle* under date of February 2-4:

“Private Letters from Paris bring an account of the death of the Rev. Mr. Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*.”

The sad news passed on from one newspaper to another, with occasional comment, by correspondents. No sooner was Sterne supposed to be dead than all his faults were forgotten against him in the vivid impression left by his last beautiful volumes. An old soldier, for example, signing himself *A Plebeian*, who had been captivated by my uncle Toby, sent a letter to *St. James's Chronicle* for February 16-18, saying:

“I see there are Letters in Town mentioning the Death of Mr. S——: I hope it is not true; but whether true or false, it is to be hoped no Man, but one who can boast of a better Heart and greater Knowledge, will, for the future, ever employ his pen to sully the Reputation of a Man, who has given the World the greatest Character that Human nature can attain to.”

Subsequently another *Plebeian*, who had read his namesake's communication, but did not know that the newspaper had already printed the episode of *Le Fever*, remonstrated with the editor in these words:

“I am surprised that you, who are capable of distinguishing what is worthy of the public Notice, should have omitted thus long the inserting in your *Chronicle* the affecting Story of Lieut. *Le Fevre*, from the last Volume of *Tristram Shandy*. As a Friend to Society, as one who feels for the Woes of another, and knows the Force of Example, I beseech you to insert it, when you have Room for so long, but inimitable Performance. Till I saw this Letter, I was not so great an Admirer of the Author of *Tristram Shandy*, as to be displeased to see some of the dirt thrown at him stick to his Coat; but this Letter has made me a penitent Convert, believing it impossible, that a Man so capable of painting the lively Impressions on his Uncle Toby's Heart, on hearing an affecting Story, can himself wear a heart that is not made of the best Materials.”

A few weeks later, “the report” of Mr. Sterne's death was announced as “premature”; and a wit discoursed in

verse upon it in *St. James's Chronicle* for March 6-9. The lines, catching the tone and movement of Sir John Suckling's "What! no more favours? Not a ribbon more?", ran on fluently:

"How! *Shandy* dead! (a well-bred Lady cries)
 With him each Grace, each social Virtue dies!
 No more, alas! shall that instructive Sage
 Expose to Light the Follies of the Age;
 No more dear Satire through the Nation reign,
 With *Shandy* fled to *Pluto's* drear Domain.

* * * * *

Madame your sad Solitude dispell,
 Illustrious *Yorick's* still alive, and well!
 Th' ingenious Writer yet again shall soar,
 On Fancy's Wing, to heights unknown before.
 The dire Report which filled our Minds with Woe,
 Was, doubtless, raised by some illiterate Foe."

In the meantime the rumours from Paris had reached York and Coxwold before any of Sterne's letters to his wife or to Lord Fauconberg. Whereupon his parishioners, wrote the steward of Newburgh Priory, all went into mourning out of respect to his memory.*

* *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, Vol. II, p. xvii (London, 1903).

CHAPTER XII

PARIS

JANUARY—JUNE 1762

THOUGH still alive, Sterne had barely escaped the fate that was beginning to press upon him. The dread disease of his youth, which had been held in check since his college days, had broken out again to his alarm. The last hemorrhage left him so weak that, in his way of saying it, his "spider legs" could no longer support him; his voice was gone to a whisper, and his face was as pale as a dishclout. But hope at no time deserted him. "When DEATH", he said, addressing his buoyant spirits in memory of the crisis, "knocked at my door—ye bad him come again; and in so gay a tone of careless indifference, did ye do it, that he doubted of his commission." The unwelcome guest, non-plussed by his reception, turned from Sterne's lodgings, saying as he went in apology for his intrusion, "There must certainly be some mistake in this matter". "By heaven!" vowed Sterne, in a hoarse whisper across the table to Eugenius, as soon as death was gone from his door, "By heaven! I will lead him a dance he little thinks of—for I will gallop * * * without looking once behind me, to the banks of the *Garonne*; and if I hear him clattering at my heels—I'll scamper away to mount *Vesuvius*." Eugenius, says Sterne, meaning thereby Hall-Stevenson, who was with him in London, "led me to my chaise—*Allons!* said I; the postboy gave a crack with his whip—off I went like a cannon, and in a half dozen bounds got into *Dover*."

At Dover awaited him a rough mid-winter passage across the Channel. While the sea chopped about with the wind in wild sport, Sterne lay in his cabin, "sick, sick, sick", sure that death had him by the throat this time. He landed at Calais in the evening, and left early the next morning by

post for Paris via Boulogne, Montreuil, Abbeville, Amiens, and Chantilly. He was too ill on the route to observe much, though "passing through the finest country", and he seems to have slept or dozed most of the journey, except when aroused by some accident to the chaise or by the postboy's demand for his fare at the successive stages. We should not forget, however, Janatone, the beautiful daughter of the inn-keeper at Montreuil, who greeted him as he stepped from his chaise on a fine evening, and whom he stood watching after supper, as she sat knitting "a white thread stocking, * * * long and taper", pinned to her knee, as if to say it was her own. All the way, save for brief intervals like this, his imagination was haunted by Death, that "long-striding scoundrel of a scare-sinner" ever posting at his heels. If he were to be overtaken, he prayed that the encounter might take place at some "decent inn", away from the concern of friends. The inn must have been very bad at Abbeville, where he lay a night, for he ordered his chaise at four o'clock the next morning, that he might not meet the scoundrel there, of all inns in the universe. Thus travelling in haste from post to post, "a pale man clad in black" was driven into Paris on the evening of January 16 or 17, 1762, completely exhausted by the journey. The physicians whom he consulted told him plainly that he "could not live a month". At best the only hope they were able to hold out to him was a sojourn in the south of France for the winter. The man who sent the notice of Sterne's death to the London newspapers was only anticipating, as every good news-writer should do, an event certain to occur by the time his letter reached its destination.

But it was ordered quite otherwise. To the surprise of his physicians, Sterne mended so rapidly that by the time he was able to go south they all advised him to stay on in Paris for the present. His quick recovery he attributed not to their medicines, but to nature, who was allowed to work her cure in the clear elastic air of Paris, aided by novel sights and the attentions of a host of new friends. When first heard from directly, he formed one of a company of "fifteen or sixteen English of distinction" living with or near one

another in the Faubourg St. Germain, a quarter of the city to which strangers usually resorted. They dined and supped together, occasionally attended the theatre *en masse*, and in smaller groups made excursions in and about the city. Among these gentlemen was George Macartney,—not yet Sir George,—“a handsome and dashing young Irishman”, who was to have a long and honourable career as diplomatist and colonial governor. He had come abroad as companion to one of Lord Holland’s sons—either Stephen Fox or his younger brother, Charles James Fox, the future statesman. Both of Lord Holland’s sons were mere striplings. Stephen, known as “the eldest cub of the Fox”, was only seventeen years old; and Charles James, still a student at Eton, was four years his junior. It is almost incredible that Lord Holland should have wished to initiate his sons into social dissipation so early; but such was his premeditated plan, and Macartney was chosen as his agent. With Macartney and “young Mr. Fox”—Stephen most likely—Sterne made his first visit to Versailles; and the next morning Macartney introduced him to Monsieur Titon, an aged patron of art and literature, to whom Sterne had letters from Garrick. Mr. Fox took him for a week down the Seine to St. Germain-en-Laye for change and rest, and often went with him, paying the entrance fees, I take it, to one of the two theatres. They usually attended the Comédie Française, close at hand, near the Boulevard St. Germain. The other theatre, the Comédie Italienne, which had just united with the Opéra Comique, was further away in the Mauconseil quarter. At the Comédie Française, Sterne saw and admired Clairon, Dumesnil, and Préville.

Préville, whom he saw in Boissy’s *Le Français à Londres*, he declared to be “Mercury himself”, so light was he in appearance and manners. Clairon he thought “extremely great”, especially in *Iphigénie*; and Dumesnil, “in some places still greater than her”. He was invited to Clairon’s receptions on Thursday, when the actress “gives to eat (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry”; and before the winter was over he was admitted to the shrines of all “the best goddesses” of the theatre. For Garrick’s sake, as

well as for his own, he interested himself in all things dramatic, purchasing and sending to his friend comic operas and pamphlets on the stage, and trying to persuade him to bring out in London an adaptation of Diderot's *Natural Son* which had been made by "a lady of talents". But as time wore on, the French theatre and all matters pertaining to it lost their attraction for him. He was bored by the conversations heard everywhere over the comic opera, then at the height of fashion, and by passionate disputes over what should be done with the Jesuits—whether they should be tolerated or expelled from the kingdom and their property be confiscated. "O God!" he cries out in a letter to Garrick, "they have nothing here, which gives the nerves so smart a blow, as those great characters in the hands of Garrick!—but I forgot I am writing to the man himself. * * * The whole city of Paris is *bewitch'd* with the comic opera, and if it was not for the affair of the Jesuits, which takes up one half of our talk, the comic opera would have it all—It is a tragical nuisance in all companies as it is, and was it not for some sudden starts and dashes—of Shandeism, which now and then either break the thread, or entangle it so, that the devil himself would be puzzled in winding it off—I should die a martyr—this by the way I never will."

As to the Comédie Française, where they performed mostly tragedies, Sterne soon grew tired of the long moralising speeches of the actors, saying he got enough preaching in his youth. "A tragedy", he tells Garrick, "is to be damn'd to-night—peace be with it, and the gentle brain which made it!" When he wanted to hear a sermon, he preferred to go and listen to Père Clement, preacher to the King of Poland, whom one of the parishes—St. Roche probably—had engaged to give "a dozen sermons" through Lent at a cost of 600 livres. A fine sketch of the dramatic orator he drew for Mrs. Sterne: "He is King Stanislas's preacher—most excellent indeed! his matter solid, and to the purpose; his manner, more than theatrical, and greater, both in his action and delivery, than Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here; he has infinite variety, and keeps up the attention by it wonderfully; his

pulpit, oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself; goes on, then rises, by a gradation of four steps, each of which he profits by, as his discourse inclines him; in short 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there were no less than five or six actors on it together."

Always keeping in touch with the English colony and its amusements, Sterne was drawn, within a fortnight, into the whirl of French society, where he reigned as the lion of the hour. It was his first London reception all over again, under clear Parisian skies. At the moment English newspapers were announcing his death, he was writing to Garrick in the elated tone of his letters from London to Miss Fourmantelle two years before:

"Well! here I am, my friend, as much improved in my health, for the time, as ever your friendship could wish, or at least your faith give credit to——by the bye I am somewhat worse in my intellectuals; for my head is turned round with what I see, and the unexpected honours I have met with here. Tristram was almost as much known here as in London, at least among your men of condition and learning, and has got me introduced into so many circles ('tis *comme à Londres*). I have just now a fortnight's dinners and suppers upon my hands—my application to the Count de Choiseul goes on swimmingly, for not only M. Pelletière (who, by the bye, sends ten thousand civilities to you and Mrs. Garrick) has undertaken my affair, but the Count de Limboursch—the Baron d'Holbach, has offered any security for the inoffensiveness of my behaviour in France——'tis more, you rogue! than you will do——This Baron is one of the most learned noblemen here, the great protector of wits, and the Scavans who are no wits—keeps open house three days a week—his house is now, as yours was to me, my own—he lives at great expence.—'Twas an odd incident when I was introduced to the Count de Bissie, which I was at his desire—I found him reading Tristram——this grandee does me great honours, and gives me leave to go a private way through his apartments into the Palais Royal, to view the Duke of Orleans' collections, every day I have

time—I have been at the doctors of Sorbonne—I hope in a fortnight to break through, or rather from, the delights of this place, which, in the *sçavoir vivre*, exceeds all the places, I believe, in this section of the globe.”

It should not be inferred that everybody in the French capital was reading *Tristram Shandy*. New to Paris, Sterne was yet to learn to make due allowance for French politeness in the many compliments paid to him as the author of a “famous book”. *Tristram* was not translated until years after Sterne’s death, and it was never very well understood in France. Still, the book was already known in a way. Anglomaniacs here and there certainly had copies, which they tried to read—Voltaire with most success. For the rest, dependence was placed upon those French journals devoted largely to European literature, which did not fail to give *résumés* of *Tristram*, prefaced with anecdotes of the Anglican clergyman who had written it to the dismay of his clerical brethren. The attention of literary Paris was first called to Sterne’s book by the *Journal Encyclopédique* in the number for April, 1760, issued on the first of May. “*C’est ici*”, declared the London correspondent, “*le monstre d’Horace. Des pensées morales, fines, délicates, faillantes, solides, fortes, impies, hazardées, téméraires; voilà ce que l’on trouve dans cet ouvrage. * * * L’Auteur n’a ni plan, ni principes, ni système: il ne veut que parler, et malheureusement on l’écoute avec plaisir. La vivacité de son imagination, le feu de ses portraits, le caractère de ses réflexions, tout plait, tout intéresse et tout séduit.*” Garrick, it was added, had given the ecclesiastic the freedom of his theatre and a lord had presented him with a benefice. The same periodical also noticed the second instalment of *Tristram Shandy* in its issue for May, 1761, saying “*Toute le monde convient, après avoir lû cette brochure, qu’elle n’a pas le sens commun, et cependant on se l’arrache des mains; quelle inconsequence!*”

Sterne was likewise taken up by Suard, the journalist and man of letters, in the *Gazette Littéraire*; and Voltaire, who was then at Ferney writing his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, (1764), quoted from Trim’s sermon a passage containing the most subtle analysis within his reading of the

insidious ways in which gain and lust may deceive the conscience. The portraits of Dr. Slop and the two Shandys, Voltaire thought "superior to the paintings of Rembrandt and the sketches of Callot"; while the "comic book" as a whole might be best compared with "those little satires of antiquity which contained qualities so piquant and fascinating".* Finally, Voltaire gave Sterne the title by which he was to be henceforth known in France; he called him, with Swift in mind, "the second Rabelais of England". The information about Sterne that accompanied him through the salons was thus of that vague kind most apt to excite curiosity to see and converse with the famous author. He bore withal the credentials of Pitt and Garrick.

Sterne entered Parisian society, his letter to Garrick would imply, through the salon of Baron d'Holbach, the Encyclopedist, who became his personal surety until a passport could be obtained from the ministry. D'Holbach, or the Baron, as his friends addressed him, was a cosmopolitan of large wealth, most simple and affable in bearing, and altogether the best type of gentleman under the old régime. He divided his year between his mansion in the Rue Royal, the very heart of aristocratic Paris, and Grandval, a beautiful chateau a few miles up the Seine, where he entertained favourite guests for days and weeks. Because of his hospitality towards all persons of distinction, whether French or foreign, he was known facetiously as "the host of Europe". When in Paris, he invited to his table, every Sunday and every Thursday, a company of philosophers and men of letters, numbering from ten to twenty. A lavish dinner, served at two o'clock, was prolonged by conversation until the hour for the theatre. The Baron's salon was aptly called by one who frequented it "the Institute of France before there was one"; for at his table were canvassed all questions of science, art, literature, politics, and religion. It was there, says the Abbé Morellet, who often dined at d'Holbach's with Sterne, that Roux and Darcet explained their theory of the earth; Marmontel set forth the principles of his *Elements of Literature*; and the host expounded his system of dogmatic atheism

* *Œuvres de Voltaire*, VII, 369 (Paris, 1876).

so clearly and persuasively as to almost win the assent of men who in their hearts could not accept his theories. On the other hand, Horace Walpole found the "Holbachian club" very dull. "I forgot to tell you", he wrote from Paris to George Selwyn in 1765, "that I sometimes go to Baron d'Olbach's; but I have left off his dinners, as there was no bearing the authors, and philosophers, and *savants*, of which he has a pigeon-house full. They soon turned my head with a new system of antediluvian deluges, which they have invented to prove the eternity of matter. The Baron is persuaded that Pall Mall is paved with lava or deluge stones. In short, nonsense for nonsense, I like the Jesuits better than the philosophers."* Sterne, too, with his imperfect knowledge of French, was at first restless under the long discourses of the savants, whom he was careful not to include among the wits; but, we may be certain, he never betrayed his impatience. He caught the Holbachian manner and was soon able to discourse in rivalry with the best of the circle.

At times four great intelligences shone in upon the Holbachian group. With the two greatest of them—Voltaire and Rousseau,—Sterne had no personal acquaintance; he may or may not have known the shy d'Alembert; but he formed an intimate friendship with Diderot, who was then, like himself, almost a member of the Baron's household. It was a delightful family as Diderot himself described it in letters to Mademoiselle Volland. Madame d'Holbach was a most agreeable woman, *douce et honnête*, with an aversion for her husband's and all other philosophy. There were several pretty children and a sprightly mother-in-law, Madame d'Aine, who knew and repeated all the current gossip and scandal. Diderot, when Sterne knew him, was midway in the *Encyclopédie*, a work which helped on immensely the emancipation of France from outworn dogmas and philosophies. Far apart as the two men were in their attitude towards existing institutions, the one a conservative and the other an iconoclast, they were nevertheless closely bound by intellect and temperament. Both were sentimentalists; both

* *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, VI, 370.

admired Locke, though they read the master differently; and both, we may say it, easily fell into buffoonery over their burgundy, to the delight, one may fancy, of old Madame d'Aine, who matched them jest for jest, while the modest Madame d'Holbach, "exquisitely dressed", sat and listened complacently to the wild and reckless warfare. It is a bit amusing to find the English sentimentalist complaining that Diderot's *Natural Son*, as he read it in translation, contained too much sentiment for his own taste, and so probably for Garrick's also. In memory of their friendship, the details of which have mostly slipped into obscurity, Sterne sent over to Becket for a box of books as a present to Monsieur Diderot. The box must contain, said the motley memorandum, the six volumes of *Shandy*, Chaucer, Locke complete, the drumstick edition of Colley Cibber, together with Cibber's *Apology*, Tillotson's *Sermons* in small volumes, and "all the *Works* of Pope—the neatest and cheapest edition—(therefore I suppose not Warburton's)". Poor Warburton! In return, Diderot honoured Sterne some years after his death, by imitating and paraphrasing *Shandy* in a novel called *Jacques le Fataliste*.

At d'Holbach's, Sterne met, in the person of Jean Baptiste Suard, a young man who played about him as a sort of Boswell. Suard was born and educated at Besançon—the birthplace of Victor Hugo,—where his father held the post of secretary to the university. An incident of Suard's youth, as bearing upon his character, is worth telling. A mere boy just out of the university, he was summoned before the governor of Besançon as a witness against a companion who, after fighting a duel with an officer of the garrison, immediately went into hiding to escape punishment. Suard refused to betray his friend. He was himself consequently arrested and imprisoned for a period on the island of Sainte-Marguerite off the coast of Cannes, where, in want of other books, his time was passed in reading the Bible and Bayle's *Dictionary*. After the death of his father, the youth drifted to Paris, with a view to literature. He was befriended by Buffon and Madame Geoffrin, and more substantially by Panckoucke, the well-known publisher, whose gifted daughter he married. During these years, he learned English and

acquired a very good knowledge of contemporary English literature. For a time he was associated with the Abbé François Arnaud on the *Journal Etranger*; and when Sterne came to Paris, Suard and his former colleague were projecting the *Gazette Littéraire*, a similar periodical under the auspices of the foreign ministry. At the same time Suard was also preparing for the press a *Supplément aux Lettres de Clarisse Harlowe*. Ten or twelve years later, he was elected to the Academy, largely through the influence of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. Suard lived on through the Revolution and the Consulate, translating many English books, and taking an active part in scientific and literary societies, especially in the reorganisation of the Institute of France.

Suard, only twenty-eight years old when he first saw Sterne, was an impressionable young man, extremely polished in manner and very facile with his pen. Under the mask of his excessive politeness, however, was a keen intelligence and an independent judgment which could assert itself when necessary, as Madame Geoffrin found when she tried to check and direct his tastes. Boswell-like, he watched Sterne closely in and out of the salons, noting the peculiarities of his "comic figure", his gestures, and the turn of his phrases, whether English or French; and for minute observation invited him often to his house, where he was equally welcomed by Madame Suard. After Sterne had come and gone, Madame Suard wrote a most just and delicate appreciation of the *Sentimental Journey*; while Sterne's "habitual gestures and words were so engraven in the memory and imagination of her husband that he could never hear Sterne's name mentioned without believing that he really saw him and was listening to him".

Suard often said that he had never seen a man at all like Sterne—always courteous to a degree and yet perfectly frank in his criticism of the French and their ways, always in a sense the same and yet always at the mercy of momentary impressions. The Court went into mourning, and Sterne at once assumed the badge. He came into France with only a reading knowledge of French; but as soon as Fox and Macartney left Paris, he took lodgings in a French family,

that he might honour his hosts by speaking their language, if not accurately, at least fluently. One night the whole fair of St. Germain—"a town in miniature"—burned to the ground, and "hundreds of unhappy people", who had lost their all, were driven from their booths to the streets in tears. The next morning, Sterne's barber, as he was shaving him, wept over the terrible misfortune to the poor creatures, and Sterne wept with him. Stopping one day before the statue of Henry the Fourth, on the Pont-Neuf, a crowd gathered about him, attracted by his peculiar movements. Turning round, Sterne called out: "Why are you all staring at me? Follow my example, all of you!" And they all fell on their knees with him before the King of France. A slave, says Garat, Suard's biographer, would never have rendered, unbidden, such homage to Henry the Fourth.

On one occasion, Suard asked Sterne to account for his extraordinary personality—for a temperament really stable and yet so volatile to all appearance. Sterne, in an unusually serious mood, readily complied with his friend's request, in a formal statement, which almost startles by its truth and relative completeness; for genius, it is supposed, never understands itself, and Sterne has said equivocally elsewhere that he could give a better account of any other man in the world than of himself. Whether the self-revelation took place over the wine at Baron d'Holbach's or when the two men were alone together, the narrative does not specify. His so-called originality, declared Sterne, should be attributed "to one of those delicate organisations in which predominates the sacred informing principle of the soul, that immortal flame which nourishes life and devours it at the same time, and which exalts and varies, in sudden and unexpected ways, all sensations". This creative faculty, said Sterne, "we call imagination or sensibility, according as it expresses itself, under the pen of a writer, in depicting scenes or in portraying the passions". But beyond his natural endowment, must be considered, added Sterne, certain acquired traits affecting mind and style, which had come from "the daily reading of the Old and New Testaments, books which were to his liking as well as necessary to his profession"; and from a prolonged

study of Locke, "which he had begun in youth and continued through life". Any one, he told Suard, who was acquainted with Locke might discover the philosopher's directing hand "in all his pages, in all his lines, in all his expressions". In conclusion, he said of Locke's philosophy, which had thus tempered everywhere his thought and manner of procedure, in his *Sermons* as well as in *Tristram Shandy*: "It is a philosophy which never attempts to explain the miracle of sensation; but reverently leaving that miracle in the hands of God, it unfolds all the secrets of the mind; and shunning the errors to which other theories of knowledge are exposed, it arrives at all truths accessible to the understanding." Finally, it is "a sacred philosophy, without which the world will never have a true universal religion, a true science of morals, nor will man without it ever attain to real command over nature".*

Sterne's singular and piquant personality, together with his *bonhomie*, made him a welcome visitor everywhere. He edified philosophers by his clear and enthusiastic exposition of Locke; he entertained wits by his jests and droll stories; and awakened, says Suard's biographer, "new emotions in tender hearts by his naïve and touching sensibility". Among these tender hearts, may we include Suard's friends, Madame Geoffrin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, whose salons ranked first for intellectual brilliancy? We may, I think, and must. True, Sterne nowhere mentions these fascinating women, but for that matter he nowhere mentions his Boswell. A few years later, when the *Sentimental Journey* came out, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse wrote two short pieces in Sterne's style, one of which recites a signal act of charity on the part of Madame Geoffrin. Sterne is represented as listening to the pathetic tale and as being so overcome by it that he "clasped Madame Geoffrin in his arms and embraced her with ecstasy".†

As in this imaginary scene, Sterne always let his emotions run forward while he scampered on after them, whither-

* D. J. Garat, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Vie de M. Suard*, II, 147-152 (Paris, 1820).

† *Œuvres Posthumes d'Alembert*, II, 22-42 (Paris, 1799); and Garat, as cited above.

soever they might lead. "I laugh till I cry", he wrote to Garrick, "and in the same tender moments, *cry till I laugh*. I Shandy it more than ever, and verily do believe, that by mere Shandeism, sublimated by a laughter-loving people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate." In a similar vein ran a letter to Hall-Stevenson from his friend Monsieur Tollot, a gentleman of Geneva and an admirer of Rousseau, then travelling in France after a nervous breakdown. Falling in with Sterne at Paris, he was struck by the buoyancy of the pale and sick Yorick, in contrast with his own miserable temperament, which never let him forget his headaches and vertigoes. On a rainy day in April, when wind and rain were so violent that he was compelled to stay in and betake himself to divers glasses of Bordeaux in order to keep off the blue devils, Monsieur Tollot sat down and wrote to the master of Skelton, saying by the way: "I sometimes envy", to translate the Genevan's French, "the happy disposition of our friend Mr. Sterne. Everything assumes the colour of the rose for that happy mortal; and what appears to others dark and gloomy, presents to him only a blithe and merry aspect. His only pursuit is pleasure; but he is not like most others who know not how to enjoy pleasure when it is within their grasp; for he drinks the bowl to the last drop and still his thirst is unquenched."*

Perhaps Sterne enjoyed himself most in the society of Claude de Thiard, the Comte de Bissy, and in the coteries to which "this grandee" introduced him. The count, then forty years old, had behind him a conspicuous military career, in which he reached the rank of lieutenant-general. In peace he had devoted himself to English studies, translating Bolingbroke's *Patriot King*, which gained him admission to the Academy. Called in from the field, as the Seven Years' War was now really over, he was living at Court, with apartments in the Palais Royal. It was a graceful compliment that he paid Sterne when the humourist first called, by appointment, for aid in securing a passport from the

* W. Durrant Cooper. *Seven Letters written by Sterne and his Friends*, 21-22 (London, printed for private circulation, 1844).

Duc de Choiseul, the prime minister. *Tristram Shandy* lay open upon the count's table. Sterne afterward played with the scene fancifully in the *Sentimental Journey*, substituting *Hamlet* for *Shandy*. But we may, I think, safely reconstruct certain parts of the conversation from Sterne's imaginative account of it. They talked of Shakespeare and of *Shandy*. The count was puzzled by Sterne's assumption of the name of Yorick, for which he could divine no reason. Sterne, reading the count's perplexed face, led him on into the notion that he was really jester to his Majesty George the Third, and at length disillusioned him humorously:

"*Pardonnez moi*, Mons. le Count, said I—I am not the king's jester.—But you are Yorick?—Yes.—*Et vous plaisantez?*—I answered, indeed I did jest—but was not paid for it—'twas entirely at my own expence.

"We have no jester at court, Mons. le Count, said I; the last was in the licentious reign of Charles II.—since which time our manners have been so gradually refining, that our court at present is so full of patriots, who wish for *nothing* but the honours and wealth of their country—and our ladies are all so chaste, so spotless, so good, so devout—there is nothing for a jester to make a jest of—

"*Voilà un persiflage!* cried the Count."

The interview was followed by the first of many invitations to dinner. One day the count enquired how he liked the French, and whether he had found them as urbane as the world gave them credit of being. Sterne replied that they were indeed polished "to an excess". His host, noting the word *excesse*, asked him to explain frankly what he meant by the implied criticism. Sterne went on to say adroitly and politely that courtesy, though in and of itself a commendable virtue, might lead to a loss of "variety and originality of character". To illustrate his hypothesis, Sterne took out of his pocket "a few of King William's shillings as smooth as glass" and proceeded:

"See, Mons. le Count, said I, rising up, and laying them before him upon the table—by jingling and rubbing one against another for seventy years together in one body's

pocket or another's, they are become so much alike, you can scarce distinguish one shilling from another.

"The English, like ancient medals, kept more apart, and passing but few people's hands, preserve the first sharpnesses which the fine hand of Nature has given them—they are not so pleasant to feel—but, in return, the legend is so visible, that at the first look you see whose image and superscription they bear. But the French, Mons. le Count, added I (wishing to soften what I had said), have so many excellencies, they can the better spare this—they are a loyal, a gallant, a generous, an ingenious, and good-temper'd people as is under heaven—if they have a fault, they are too *serious*.

"*Mon Dieu!* cried the Count, rising out of his chair.

"*Mais vous plaisantez*, said he, correcting his exclamation. —I laid my hand upon my breast, and with earnest gravity assured him it was my most settled opinion."*

Having once mastered the art of courtesy, the humourist easily outdid the French as he passed through the great houses to which his friendship with the count recommended him. Sterne and Choiseul met in one of the fashionable salons. The duke observing a group about an odd-looking Englishman and overhearing scraps of the conversation, turned to a friend and enquired "Who the deuce is that man over there, that Chevalier Shandy." On being told that it was the author of the bizarre book which he had heard of if not read, he stepped up to Monsieur Sterne, and a dialogue ensued which made Sterne "as vain as a devil". The duke subsequently signed a passport for Chevalier Sterne, remarking pleasantly, as he handed it to the Comte de Bissy, that *un homme qui rit ne peut être dangereux*. In return, Sterne begged that the prime minister be assured that he had not come into France to spy out the nakedness of the land.

On being introduced by the Comte de Bissy to the Duc de Biron, Maréchal de France, who, says Sterne, had formerly

* The essential truth of this anecdote is confirmed in an article which appeared in the *London Chronicle* for April 16-18, 1765, or nearly two years before the publication of the *Sentimental Journey*. Under the heading, "Foreign Literature", the newspaper gave an abstract of Suard on Sterne, from the *Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe*.

“signaliz’d himself by some small feats of chivalry in the *Cour d’amour*, and had dress’d himself out to the idea of tilts and tournaments ever since”, the duke expressed a wish to cross the Channel to see the English ladies. “Stay where you are, I beseech you, Mons. le Marquis”, broke in Sterne, forgetting the duke’s title, “——Les Messrs Anglois can scarce get a kind look from them as it is.” The duke invited Sterne home to a ten o’clock supper. In like manner, Sterne made the acquaintance of La Popelinière, the richest of the farmers-general, who, as described in a letter to Mrs. Sterne, “lives here like a sovereign prince; keeps a company of musicians always in his house, and a full set of players; and gives concerts and plays alternately to the grandees of this metropolis”. Instead of the English ladies, the farmer-general enquired about the English taxes, saying “They were very considerable, he heard”. Sterne admitted that the taxes of his country were considerable enough, “if we knew but how to collect them”, and made the gentleman a low bow. That evening Sterne received an invitation “to his music and table” for the season.

La Popelinière had a musical rival in Baron de Bagge, chamberlain to the King of Prussia. The baron was a melomaniac of large wealth, who fancied that he possessed great musical talent, though he could scarce play the violin. He came to Paris and opened a salon with an array of musicians, whom he paid to take imaginary lessons from him. It was not Sterne but another who once remarked to the baron that he had never heard any one play the violin like him. Sterne found the baron’s concerts “very fine, both music and company”. The next night after attending one of them, he supped at the Temple, with the Prince de Conti, who lived there in great state, with a court of his own.

With much amusement Sterne studied the various feminine types seen in the salons, a summary of which he gave in a sketch of Madame de Vence, said to have been a descendant of Madame de Sévigné. “There are three epochas”, he observed in speaking of her, “in the empire of a French woman—She is coquette—then deist—then *dévoté*. * * *

When thirty-five years and more have unpeopled her domin-

ions of the slaves of love, she repeoples them with slaves of infidelity—and then with the slaves of the church. Madame de V[ence] was vibrating betwixt the first of these epochas.” Seated upon the sofa together “for the sake of disputing the point of religion more closely”, Sterne told her that, whereas it might be her principle to believe nothing, it was nevertheless a most dangerous thing for a beauty to turn deist, and thereby remove all those checks and restraints which religion cast about the passions. “I declare”, says Sterne, “I had the credit all over Paris of unpervverting Madame de V[ence]—She affirmed to Mons. D[iderot] and the Abbé M[orellet], that in one half-hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their Encyclopedia had said against it.” Madame de Vence put off, as it turned out, the epoch of deism for two years.

“I remember”, says Sterne further, “it was in this *Coterie*, in the middle of a discourse, in which I was shewing the necessity of a *first cause*, that the young Count de Fainéant took me by the hand to the farthest corner of the room to tell me my *solitaire* was pinn’d too strait about my neck—It should be *plus badinant*, said the Count, looking down upon his own—but a word, Mons. Yorick, *to the wise*—

“—And *from the wise*, Mons. le Count, replied I making him a bow—is enough.

“The Count de Fainéant embraced me with more ardour than ever I was embraced by mortal man.”

Anecdotes must always be accepted with a grain of allowance. “I do a thousand things”, Sterne wrote to Garrick, “which cut no figure, *but in the doing*—and as in London, I have the honour of having done and said a thousand things I never did or dream’d of—and yet I dream abundantly.” The anecdotes that I have mingled with the narrative, however, are very much better authenticated than is the usual case,—some by Suard through his biographer Garat, and most by Sterne himself, who, of course, ornamented them after his own fashion. In paying the French in their own polite coin, Sterne came at times, as he felt himself, perilously near sycophancy. “For three weeks together”, he said, shorten-

ing the period for artistic purposes, "I was of every man's opinion I met.—*Pardi! ce Mons. Yorick a autant d'esprit que nous autres.*—*Il raisonne bien*, said another—*C'est un bon enfant*, said a third,—And at this price I could have eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris; but 'twas a dishonest *reckoning*—I grew ashamed of it.—It was the gain of a slave—every sentiment of honour revolted against it—the higher I got, the more was I forced upon my *beggarly system*." But to go on. In one of the salons Sterne encountered Crébillon the younger, wit and novelist, author of *Les Egaremens de Cœur et de l'Esprit*. Before they separated, they entered into a comic convention. Crébillon agreed to write Sterne "an expostulatory letter upon the indecorums of Tristram Shandy" and Sterne was to reply with "a recrimination upon the liberties" in Crébillon's works. The two pamphlets were "to be printed together—Crébillon against Sterne—Sterne against Crébillon—the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided." The scheme miscarried, either because, as Sterne predicted, Crébillon was too lazy to perform his part of the jest, or because—and more likely—he was unable to read and understand *Tristram Shandy*.

Of all the prizes Sterne drew in the French capital, none pleased him quite so much as his winning the attention of Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orléans. Though only thirty-seven years old, the duke had already had a brilliant career in the army. At Dettingen a horse was shot under him. The war with England over, he had come in from the field, and was giving himself up, like other officers of rank, to pleasure and friendships, alternating his residence, with a strolling court, between the Palais Royal and his seat at Bagnolet. For his entertainment he kept in his household Carmontelle, to write novels and farces and to paint his friends at Court. Struck by Sterne's eccentric character, the duke requested the pleasure of adding, from Carmontelle's hand, the humourist's portrait to a favourite collection of small water-colours. Carmontelle drew Sterne in profile at full length, as he stood, it would seem, on the terrace of the Palais Royal, with the city and the dome of the Invalides in the background.



Laurence Sterne
From a watercolour by Carmontelle at Chantilly

Sterne turned his face towards the palace gardens, and bent slightly forward as he laid his right arm across the back of a chair, half closing the hand. His left hand he thrust into a pocket, and threw one leg gracefully across the other. His spare figure was dressed faultlessly for the occasion in complete black, with ruffled lace-sleeves and lace-cravat tied loose, just as the Count de Fainéant had told him it ought to be. One misses the fine eyes of the front view chosen by Reynolds, but about the mouth are the same lines of mirth and good nature, with a trace of the full lips so conspicuous in the Ramsay portrait of Sterne's youth. It is the portrait of a man growing old in his labours and pleasures, taken, Sterne thought, "most expressively".*

Sterne's original design of going south had been upset by the improvement of his health, and "the great civilities" of his new friends, from whom he found it hard to break away. So he decided to trail on in Paris until the end of May and then return home through Holland. But early in April came disturbing news from York. His daughter Lydia, who had suffered from asthma for several years, was declining so rapidly that her mother feared she could not survive another English winter. On receiving the alarming message, Sterne reconsidered his plans. For himself, his cheeks now rosy, he was ready to go back to his desk. And yet perhaps it would be better, after all, for him to summon his wife and daughter over to Paris and pass a winter with them at Toulouse, "free from coughs and colds". The faculty strongly advised this course for the complete restoration of his own health beyond likelihood of relapse. Sterne at once wrote to Lord Fauconberg and the Archbishop of York, explaining the situation, and thereby gaining their assent to an extension of his leave of absence from Coxwold. He was going, he told them, to the south of France, not so much on his own account as his daughter's, whom he was anxious to save if possible. But Sterne, as well as his physicians, had misread his condition. Near the middle of April, he went out to Versailles to solicit the necessary pass-

* The portrait is now in the Duc d'Aumale's collection at Chantilly. It has been reproduced by Messrs. Colnaghi and Co., London.

ports from the Duke of Choiseul. On his return, he was attacked with a fever, "which ended", Sterne says, "the worst way it could for me, in a *défluxion poitrine*, as the French physicians call it. It is generally fatal to weak lungs, so that I have lost in ten days all I have gain'd since I came here; and, from a relaxation of my lungs, have lost my voice entirely, that 'twill be much if I ever quite recover it'".

As usual, Sterne was soon out of bed as if nothing serious had occurred. But the season was passing and there were fewer engagements. When the curtain falls upon his five months of dinners, he was, as first seen, among his countrymen, doing honour to his Majesty George the Third. This was the last scene in the Shandy drama for the present. The story is told by the other chief performer, by Louis Dutens, the diplomatist, in his *Memoirs*. Dutens, though a Frenchman, had been at the Court of Turin for some time as *chargé d'affaires* for the King of England. On the appointment of George Pitt, first Baron Rivers, as Envoy and Minister to Turin, Dutens was ordered to Paris to take part in the preliminary negotiations for peace between France and England. He set out from Turin on the tenth of May, travelling in company with the Marquis of Tavistock, son of the Duke of Bedford—a young man only twenty-three years old,—and John Turberville Needham, the Roman Catholic scientist who had a hot tilt with Voltaire over the question of miracles. Needham was on the journey homewards, after making the grand tour as tutor to John Talbot Dillon, a young Irishman about Lord Tavistock's age, who will figure later as one of Sterne's close associates. Dillon, it may be said immediately for his further identification, spent most of his life in foreign travel and in writing about Spain and other lands he visited. Emperor Joseph the Second of Austria bestowed upon him the title of Free Baron of the Holy Roman Empire. On the anniversary of George the Third's birthday, the fourth of June, Lord Tavistock invited Sterne and a few other English gentlemen who were still in Paris to meet his Turin friends at dinner. Without formal introduction, it would appear, the guests sat down to table. What occurred I may leave to the pen of Dutens himself, a

queer character, who had done queer things at the Court of the King of Sardinia, vague rumours of which had doubtless reached Sterne:

“I sat”, says Dutens,* “between Lord Berkeley, who was going to Turin, and the famous Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, who was considered as the Rabelais of England. We were very jovial during dinner; and drank, in the English manner, the toasts of the day. The conversation turned upon Turin, which several of the company were on the point of visiting: upon which Mr. Sterne, addressing himself to me, asked me if I knew Mr. Dutens, naming me. I replied, ‘Yes, very intimately.’ The whole company began to laugh; and Sterne, who did not suppose me so near him, imagined that this Mr. Dutens must be a very singular character, since the mention of the name alone excited merriment. ‘Is he not a rather strange fellow?’ added he, immediately. ‘Yes’, replied I, ‘an original.’——‘I thought so’, continued he; ‘I have heard him spoken of:’ and then he began to draw a picture of me, the truth of which I pretended to acknowledge; while Sterne, seeing that the subject amused the company, invented from his fertile imagination many stories, which he related in his way, to the great diversion of us all.”

“I was the first”, Dutens goes on to say, “who withdrew; and I had scarcely left the house, when they told him who I was: they persuaded him that I had restrained myself at the time from respect to Lord Tavistock; but that I was not to be offended with impunity, and that he might expect to see me on the next day, to demand satisfaction for the improper language which he had used concerning me. Indeed he thought he had carried his raillery too far, for he was a little merry: he therefore came the following morning to see me, and to beg pardon for anything that he might have said to offend me; excusing himself by that circumstance, and by the great desire he had to amuse the company, who had appeared so merrily disposed from the moment he first mentioned my name. I stopped him short at once, by assuring him that I was as much amused at his mistake as any of the party; that he had said nothing which could

* *Memoirs of a Traveller*, II, 5-8 (London, 1806).

offend me; and that, if he had known the man he had spoken of as well as I did, he might have said much worse things of him. He was delighted with my answer, requested my friendship, and went away highly pleased with me.”*

* This merry jest was strangely employed by Thackeray to prove that Sterne was not a true gentleman, although he may be regarded as one by “my Superfine friend”. It is perhaps worth while to quote the novelist’s paragraph (afterwards suppressed), as an example of the way in which Sterne has been often misinterpreted. After retelling the story, Thackeray remarked:

“Ah, dear Laurence! You are lucky in having such a true gentleman as my friend to appreciate you! You see he was lying, but then he was amusing the whole company. When Laurence found they were amused, he told more lies. Your true gentlemen always do. Even to get the laugh of the company at a strange table, perhaps you and I would not tell lies: but then we are not true gentlemen. And see in what a true gentlemanlike way Laurence carries off the lies! A man who wasn’t accustomed to lying might be a little disconcerted at meeting with a person to whose face he had been uttering abuse and falsehood. Not so Laurence. He goes to Dutens; * * * embraces him, and asks for his friendship! Heaven bless him! Who would not be honoured by the friendship of a true gentleman, who had just told lies about you to your face?”—*Cornhill Magazine*, II, 633.

CHAPTER XIII

JOURNEY TO TOULOUSE

JULY AND AUGUST, 1762

AMID the merriments of the English colony, Sterne was playing admirably the part of paterfamilias. His wife and daughter had come into York, as was customary, for the previous winter, where they were occupying a house in the Minster Yard, under the protection of Hall-Stevenson. "My family, my Lord", he wrote to the Earl of Fauconberg, "is a very small machine, but it has many wheels in it, and I am forced too often to turn them about—not as I would—but as I can." No sooner, however, had Sterne regained his emotional poise, after the first exciting weeks in Paris, than he got into touch with the complicated machine at home, and guided its movements as well as he could at long distance. He related in letters to Mrs. Sterne such incidents in his great reception as he thought would interest her most, and gave her instructions in the care and management of Lydia, who should be kept by all means to her French. As presents to his wife, he sent home two snuff-boxes, in charge of a friend, one filled with garnets and the other containing an etching of Carmontelle's water-colour. When it was decided that Mrs. Sterne and Lydia should come over and go south with him, he posted off letter after letter, describing in minute detail all arrangements for the journey. As he stated it in one of the letters, "I have almost drain'd my brains dry on the subject".

It was not an easy thing for an English parson with only a moderate income to establish his household in another country; but Sterne took up the practical problem with the method and good sense that he had applied in earlier years to numerous parish questions. Toulouse was chosen for several reasons. Provisions he found, on enquiry, were cheap

there; several English friends, including "old Hewitt" and his family, were to be there for the winter, and the town was recommended to him by the faculty. While his plans were forming, he was referred for practical help to an "Abbé Mackarty"—doubtless a member of the Irish MacCarthy Reagh family, then settled at Toulouse. The Abbé, who had previously rendered similar aid to Hall-Stevenson and the Skelton set, was commissioned to take a pleasant house for the Sternes, near or within the city, at his discretion.

A house engaged and the cost of living reckoned up, Sterne next adjusted his affairs at home to the new arrangements. James Kilner, his curate at Coxwold, was recommended to the Archbishop of York for the priesthood. Richard Chapman, steward of Newburgh Priory, was to look after the finances of the parish in Sterne's interest. In like manner Stephen Croft was to represent Sterne at Sutton and Stillington, where important parish matters needed attention, for some of the land-owners wished to inclose Rascal Common. Sterne wrote back that he would not stand in the way of the project, provided he received his share. A bureau had to be broken open for Sterne's deeds, and Croft was given a power of attorney to act for the vicar. The squire was also delegated to provide for the commissary's visitations of Pickering and Pocklington. All moneys received were to be sent up to London by Sterne's agents, to Selwin, banker and correspondent of Panchaud and Foley, in Rue St. Sauveur, Paris. In turn, the banking firm at Paris was to remit to Messrs. Brousse et Fils of Toulouse. Besides all this, Mrs. Sterne was enjoined to bring over at least three hundred pounds in her pocket, for that amount would be immediately necessary. There were still other little preparations incident to a long journey, to which Sterne did not fail to call her attention:

"Bring your silver coffee-pot, 'twill serve both to give water, lemonade, and orjead—to say nothing of coffee and chocolate. * * * Do not say I forgot you, or whatever can be conducive to your ease of mind, in this journey—I wish I was with you, to do these offices myself, and to strew roses on your way—but I shall have time and occasion to shew

you I am not wanting—Now, my dears, once more pluck up your spirits—trust in God—in me—and in yourselves—with this, was you put to it, you would encounter all these difficulties ten times told—Write instantly, and tell me you triumph over all fears; tell me Lydia is better, and a helpmate to you—You say she grows like me—let her shew me she does so in her contempt of small dangers, and fighting against the apprehensions of them, which is better still. * * * Give my love to Mr. Fothergill, and to those true friends which Envy has spared me—and for the rest, *laissez passer*. * * * Dear Bess, I have a thousand wishes, but have a hope for every one of them—You shall chant the same *jubilate*, my dears, so God bless you. My duty to Lydia, which implies my love too. Adieu, believe me

Your affectionate, L. Sterne.”

Owing to many delays, it was the twenty-first of June, or a day or two after, when Mrs. Sterne and Lydia set out from York for London, under the most precise directions from the head of the family. “I would advise you”, he wrote to them, “to take three days in coming up, for fear of heating yourselves.—See that they do not give you a bad vehicle, when a better is in the yard, but you will look sharp—drink small Rhenish to keep you cool, (that is if you like it.) Live well, and deny yourselves nothing your hearts wish. So God in heaven prosper and go along with you.” On arriving in London, they put up with their friends the Edmundsons, who showed them many “marks of kindness”, to the satisfaction of Sterne. Into the scant week they stayed in town was crowded much business and shopping, if they executed the contents of letters that had been coming every post from Paris. Most important of all, Mrs. Sterne was to go with Mr. Edmundson to Becket’s and collect what might be due on the *Shandys*. Becket had sold 2824 copies, which should have yielded the author £300 or more. How far Sterne had already drawn on his publisher for expenses in Paris is not known; but there was probably a comfortable sum still to his credit. Next, Mrs. Sterne and her adviser must, if possible, induce Becket to purchase the remainder

of the edition, numbering in the whole 4000 sets, by the offer of "a handsome allowance for the chances and drawbacks" on his side. Should they succeed to this extent, then they might try him on the copyright, holding out as a bait the promise of the nay-say on the next instalment of *Shandy*. Becket gave Mrs. Sterne a bill addressed to his Paris correspondent in settlement of the account to date, but did not touch the bait set for the unsold copies and the copyright.

After this business with Becket, Mrs. Sterne should make additions to her wardrobe. "If you consider", wrote her husband, "Lydia must have two slight negligees—you will want a new gown or two—as for painted linens, buy them in town, they will be more admired because English than French.—Mrs. Hewit writes me word that I am mistaken about buying silk cheaper at Toulouse than Paris, that she advises you to buy what you want here—where they are very beautiful and cheap, as well as blonds, gauzes, &c.—these I say will all cost you sixty guineas—and you must have them—for in this country nothing must be spared for the back—and if you dine on an onion, and lie in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your cloaths, according to which you are well or ill look'd on."

Then came numerous small purchases conducive to the peace of the household, which Sterne huddled together in his letters:

"Do not forget the watch-chains—bring a couple for a gentleman's watch likewise; we shall lie under great obligations to the Abbé M[ackarty] and must make him such a small acknowledgement; according to my way of flourishing, 'twill be a present worth a kingdom to him.—They have bad pins, and vile needles here—bring for yourself, and some for presents—as also a strong bottle-skrew, for whatever Scrub we may hire as butler, coachman, &c., to uncork us our Frontinac. * * * I had like to have forgot a most necessary thing, there are no copper tea-kettles to be had in France, and we shall find such a thing the most comfortable utensil in the house—buy a good strong one, which will hold two quarts—a dish of tea will be a comfort to us in our journey south—I have a bronze tea-pot, which we will

carry also—as china cannot be brought over from England, we must make up a villainous party-coloured tea equipage, to regale ourselves, and our English friends, whilst we are at Toulouse.” In the list were also knives and cookery-books, with three sets of *Shandy* and three sets of *Sermons* for presents to Parisian friends. And finally to the comfort of a wife who had the amiable habit of snuff-taking: “Give the Custom-House officers what I told you——at Calais give more, if you have much Scotch snuff—but as tobacco is good here, you had best bring a Scotch mill and make it yourself, that is, order your valet to manufacture it——’twill keep him out of mischief.”

If Sterne’s plans did not miscarry, a good-natured horse-trader, who had brought over a sister of Panchaud’s, conducted Mrs. Sterne and Lydia to Dover, put them up at the Cross Keys, and saw them across the Channel on a cartel ship. At Calais they were to lodge at the Lyon d’Argent, the master of which they must look out for, as he was “a Turk in grain”. With the inn-keeper they would find a letter giving final directions, with an enclosure from “Mr. Colebrooks, the minister of Swisserland’s secretary”, addressed to the custom-house officer. “You must be cautious”, Mrs. Sterne was warned again, “about Scotch snuff——take half a pound in your pocket, and make Lyd do the same.” At this time it was well-nigh impossible for travellers to obtain conveyance from Calais to Paris, since all the chaises of France had been sent to the army to bring in the officers. By good luck, however, Sterne obtained a fine one from his friend Thomas Thornhill of London, who was returning from a continental tour. “You will be in raptures”, wrote Sterne, “with your chariot.—Mr. R. a gentleman of fortune, who is going to Italy, and has seen it, has offered me thirty guineas for my bargain.—You will wonder all the way, how I am to find room in it for a third—to ease you of this wonder, ’tis by what the coachmakers here call a cave, which is a second bottom added to that you set your feet upon, which lets the person (who sits over against you) down with his knees to your ancles, and by which you have all more room——and what is more, less heat,——because

his head does not intercept the fore-glass——little or nothing——Lyd and I will enjoy this by turns; sometimes I will take a *bidet*——(a little post-horse) and scamper before——at other times I shall sit in *fresco* upon the arm-chair without doors, and one way or other will do very well.——I am under infinite obligations to Mr. Thornhill, for accommodating me thus, and so genteelly, for 'tis like making a present of it." The chaise was to be left at Calais with a written order for its delivery to Mrs. Sterne. "Send for your chaise", was the last caution, "into the court-yard, and see all is tight——Buy a chain at Calais, strong enough not to be cut off, and let your portmanteau be tied on the fore part of your chaise for fear of a dog's trick——so God bless you both, and remember me to my Lydia."

Travelling *toute doucement*, owing to the heat, and refreshed by the tea they brought with them, Mrs. Sterne and Lydia arrived in Paris on Thursday the eighth of July. It had been for Sterne a long and anxious period of waiting, varied by some amusements. The summer had set in hot about the first of May, and the heat increased every day, until Paris became "as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's oven". Sterne nevertheless undertook to go about as if he were in cool Yorkshire. One good story of his excursions he himself told at the expense of his facility with French. True, he had quickly attuned his ear to understanding the language, and he learned to speak it easily, but only after an Englishman's fashion, that is, with a disregard of the idioms and the auxiliary verbs. "I have had a droll adventure here", as Sterne described it for the entertainment of Lady D——, "in which my Latin was of some service to me——I had hired a chaise and a horse to go about seven miles into the country, but, *Shandean* like, did not take notice that the horse was almost dead when I took him——Before I got halfway, the poor animal dropp'd down dead——so I was forced to appear before the Police, and began to tell my story in French, which was, that the poor beast had to do with a worse beast than himself, namely *his master*, who had driven him all the day before (Jehulike) and that he had neither had corn, or hay, therefore I was not to pay for the

horse—but I might as well have whistled, as have spoke French, and I believe my Latin was equal to my uncle Toby's Lilabulero—being not understood because of it's purity, but by dint of words I forced my judge to do me justice—no common thing by the way in France."

His imprudence, together with attention to his wife's journey and the approaching settlement at Toulouse, brought on, towards the end of June, another severe hemorrhage. "It happen'd in the night", he wrote to Hall-Stevenson, "and I bled the bed full, and finding in the morning I was likely to bleed to death, I sent immediately for a surgeon to bleed me at both arms—this saved me, and with lying speechless three days, I recovered upon my back in bed; the breach healed, and in a week after I got out." Sterne at once gave up a design of taking his wife and daughter to Spa through the hot summer, convinced now that he must hasten to Toulouse for rest and quiet. They remained in Paris for a week or ten days, time enough for sight-seeing and necessary purchases of silks, blonds, and gauzes. As a present to Mrs. Edmundson, they sent over to London by "Mr. Stanhope, the Consul of Algiers (I mean his lady)" an India taffety, in memory of recent hospitality and kindness. Lydia, said her father, did nothing at first but sit by the window of their apartments and "complain of the torment of being frizzled". He expressed the wish that she might ever remain thus the "child of nature", for he hated the "children of art". The day before leaving Paris, the Sternes received a pleasant visit from Lawson Trotter, an uncle of Hall-Stevenson and the master of Skelton before the year forty-five. The old Jacobite, who feared to return to England, came on business wherein Sterne acted as agent for Hall-Stevenson. He stayed to dinner, after which Sterne showed him a copy of the *Crazy Tales* just out; and was "made happy beyond expression" by the book and "more so with its frontispiece", the humorous sketch of Skelton Castle. But for Sterne himself, the visit awakened homesickness for Yorkshire. "'Tis now", he wrote a few weeks afterwards to Hall-Stevenson, "I wish all warmer climates, countries, and everything else, at —, that separates me

from our paternal seat——*ce sera là où reposera ma cendre—
et ce sera là où mon cousin viendra repandre les pleurs dues
à notre amitié.*”

On Monday the nineteenth of July, as near as can be made out, the Sternes began the long and expensive journey to Toulouse by way of Lyons, Avignon, and Montpellier, travelling by post most of the way, as was Sterne’s custom. Their chaise, which was narrow and cramped, despite the cave for Lydia’s feet, they piled with baggage, before and aft, mountains high. For such a load were necessary at least four horses with two postillions, which would be exchanged for fresh ones at the successive stages. As the posts were then farmed out by the king, the exactions were most oppressive, especially at royal posts like Lyons, where one paid double. It is certain that the three hundred pounds which Mrs. Sterne brought over in her pocket shrunk more than half by the time the party arrived in Toulouse. The serious details of the journey Sterne never cared to recall, but the humorous side of it he touched upon in a letter or two, and made it the main subject of the next volume of *Tristram Shandy*. By abating his extravagances here and there, perhaps we may tell the story somewhat as it was, though the narrative will be scant and never quite trustworthy.

Sterne chose the longest route to Toulouse with the manifest intent of sight-seeing. To this end he took along, as any one may see, the *Nouveau Voyage en France* by Piganiol de la Force, the Baedeker of the period, who mapped out all the post roads and described all the things which a traveller should observe by the way and at the halting places. In the pocket of the chaise were placed also note-books or loose sheets, on which Sterne was to record his own impressions. But owing to the extreme heat, and the many annoyances at the different posts, Sterne implies that he paid little attention to the guide-book’s list of *videnda*. None of the first places on the route—Fontainebleau, Sens, and Joigny—interested him much, until he reached Auxerre, about which he could “go on forever”; though he had in fact little to say of the town, where he may have strolled about for a day or two. On a visit to the ruined Abbey of St. Germain, the

sacristan pointed out the tomb of St. Maxima, in life “one of the fairest and most beautiful ladies, either of Italy or France”, who four centuries ago came to Auxerre to touch the bones of St. Germain, and, after lying in her coffin two hundred years or more, was enrolled among the saints. Sterne thought that her rise, like the rest of the army of martyrs, was “a desperate slow one”; and asked, as he walked on to the next tomb, “Who the duce has got lain down here, besides her?” The sacristan, starting to reply that it was St. Optat, a bishop—was cut short by his visitor, who remarked that the bones of St. Optat were most fortunate in their resting place, as Mr. Shandy could have foretold from his name, the most auspicious that a bishop might bear. This may have been a sly hit at the Archbishop of York, who still enjoyed the old option of appointing a favourite to a benefice in the diocese of a newly consecrated bishop. So ended Auxerre.

All the way from Paris there had been more than the usual stops and hindrances from broken ropes, slipping knots, and loosened staples. Still the family had travelled thus far with a degree of comfort; but as they proceeded farther south, vexations were turned to downright suffering. Their conveyance proved hopelessly inadequate; the inns grew more and more intolerable; the roads were dusty; and the southern sun beat upon them with deadly rays. After it was all over, Sterne wrote to his friend Foley the banker, with special reference to the journey from this point southwards: “I never saw a cloud from Paris to Nismes half as broad as a twenty-four sols piece.—Good God! we were toasted, roasted, grill’d, stew’d and carbonaded on one side or other all the way—and being all done enough (*assez cuits*) in the day, we were ate up at night by bugs, and other unswept out vermin, the legal inhabitants (if length of possession gives right) of every inn we lay at.” On one of these fierce days, just as Lyons was in sight, the chaise overturned and broke “into a thousand pieces”. Chaise and baggage were thrown “higgledy-piggledy” into a cart, behind which the pilgrims walked demurely into the city.

As they were passing through the streets to the inn of

Monsieur Le Blanc, in the western quarter of the town, a pert chaise-vamper stepped nimbly up to Sterne and asked if he would have his chaise refitted. “No, no, said I, shaking my head sideways—Would Monsieur chuse to sell it? rejoin’d the undertaker—With all my soul, said I—the iron work is worth forty livres—and the glasses worth forty more—and the leather you may take to live on.” Thornhill’s beautiful chariot, which cost Sterne ten guineas, accordingly went for four louis d’ors. To make good the loss as well as to avoid further misfortunes on the road, Sterne decided to take the boat to Avignon, which left the next day at noon. By changing to this mode of travel, his purse would be the better, as he reckoned it, by four hundred livres. The next morning he was up early, breakfasting on “milk-coffee”, and ready to start out by eight o’clock to see those curiosities of Lyons which Piganiol de la Force made so much of. Whereupon a series of cross-accidents intervened to bring all to naught. As he was about to pass from the *basse cour* of his inn to the street, he was met at the gate by an ass munching the stem of an artichoke. He had to stop and watch Old Honesty drop and pick up the bitter morsel half a dozen times, and then to try, out of pleasantry, the effect of a macaroon upon him in place of the artichoke. So much of the famous communion with the ass at Lyons may possibly be fact. Once outside the gate, Sterne was stopped by a commissary from the post-office “with a rescript in his hand for the payment of some six livres odd sous, * * * for the next post from hence to St. Fons” in the route to Avignon. Puzzled at the demand, Sterne explained to the commissary that he did not intend to take post, but was going by water down the Rhone. “*C’est tout égal*”, replied the commissary, and handed Monsieur the rescript to read for himself. From the curious document, Sterne learned why Monsieur La Popelinière, the rich farmer-general, was able to keep open house and a band of musicians for the entertainment of all Paris; more specifically he learned, by the help of the officer, “that if you set out with an intention of running post from *Paris* to *Avignon*, &c., you shall not change that intention or mode of travelling, without first

satisfying the fermiers for two posts further than the place you repent at". After a vigorous protest, Sterne paid the six livres in order that the revenues of the kingdom might not fall short through the fickleness of an English gentleman.

Determined, however, to make an immediate record of the imposition, Sterne put his hand into his coat-pocket for the note-book he had brought with him; but, to his consternation, the note-book, containing all his clever observations, was gone—lost or stolen. As soon as his head cleared up a little, it occurred to him that he had left his notes in the pocket of his chaise, and in selling the vehicle, had sold his notes along with it. Nothing to do then but hasten off to the chaise-vamper, where they were discovered and returned to him. As Sterne pointed the story for his comic history, the sheets had been torn up the night before by the wife of the chaise-maker, and used as papillotes in frizzling her hair. She untwisted the papers from her curls and placed them gravely one by one in his hat. The morning was now so far advanced that only an hour was left for seeing the objects for which Lyons was renowned. With François, his *valet de place*, he ran over to the Cathedral of St. Jean for just a look at the mechanism of the wonderful clock set up in the choir by Lippius of Bâle. He got no farther than the west door of the cathedral, where a minor canon told him that the "great clock was all out of joints and had not gone for some years"; so he hurried away to the Jesuits' library, where reposed, among the treasures, a general history of China in thirty volumes, all in the Chinese language and Chinese characters. That curiosity he was destined not to peruse, for the library was closed, all the Jesuits being ill, Sterne opined, of a colic. This was Sterne's way of saying that the Jesuits were out of favour with the ministry. Nothing now remained on his schedule of *videnda* except the Tomb of the two Lovers, outside the gate, in the Faubourg de Vaise. The origin of that tomb or little temple and what it meant, Sterne knew from his guide-book, had been for a long time a question in dispute among the savants. Adopting the sentimental explanation, Sterne felt sure that it was a monument erected to the constancy of Amandus and Amanda, who, after long separation

and captivity, met at Lyons, and, flying into each other's arms, dropped down dead for joy. That spot of all others in the world must not be missed. The site of the tomb was easily found, but no monument was visible, for it had been razed to the ground many years before, as was indeed the fact, by the *consulat de Lyon*.

Sterne recrossed the city barely in time for the noon boat, aboard which his family and baggage awaited him. He is strangely reticent on the voyage down the Rhone, except to intimate that he was pleased with the rush of the stream while his boat shot merrily along between "banks advancing and returning", and by the foot of the vine-covered Hermitage and Côte-Rôtie. On the evening he landed at Avignon, the wind was blowing violently, though it had not reached the fury of the mistral; and Sterne lost his hat. He wished to enquire of some learned man about the proverb that "Avignon is more subject to high winds than any town in all France", but he could find no one to converse with except his landlord, for everybody else was either duke, marquis, or count. To escape for the future the discomforts of the journey from Paris to Lyons, he sent his wife and daughter on by post, while he engaged for himself a mule and servant with horse. As he was setting out from his inn, a ludicrous adventure befell him much like one that happened to Smollett at Joigny a year later. The irritable novelist, sitting in his chaise before the post-office, waiting for a change of horses, was politely addressed by a man who stepped up to the chaise-window. Supposing the stranger to be the inn-keeper of the place, Smollett turned to him savagely and ordered him to help a servant in adjusting the displaced trunks. A few minutes later he learned to his chagrin that he had insulted a nobleman. Under similar circumstances Yorick's conduct was more urbane:

"Prithee, friend, said I, take hold of my mule for a moment—for I wanted to pull off one of my jack-boots, which hurt my heel—the man was standing quite idle at the door of the inn, and as I had taken it into my head, he was someway concerned about the house or stable, I put the bridle into his hand—so begun with the boot:—when I

had finished the affair, I turned about to take the mule from the man, and thank him——

“——But *Monsieur le Marquis* had walked in——”

On the morning of the start, Sterne was in buoyant mood, in anticipation of the rare journey through the rich plain of Languedoc to the banks of the Garonne. He was also in excellent health. “I had left Death”, he said playfully, “the Lord knows—and He only—how far behind me. * * * Still he pursued——but like one who pursued his prey without hope——as he lagg’d, every step he lost, soften’d his looks.” One may fancy the scene as the travellers crossed the bridge at Avignon. Ahead was the chaise with Mrs. Sterne and Lydia, followed by the owner of the outfit striding along on foot, with a gun thrown across his shoulder to frighten off robbers; next came Sterne riding a mule; and a servant on horseback brought up the rear, bearing his master’s luggage, in case the company should get separated at night. If Sterne tells the truth, he loitered behind terribly, stopping and talking to every one on the way——peasants at their work, strolling beggars, pilgrims, fiddlers, and friars. “I was always in company, and with great variety too; * * * I am confident we could have passed through *Pall-Mall* or *St. James’s-Street* for a month together, with fewer adventures——and seen less of human nature.”

With Sterne time counted for nothing. Meeting a couple of Franciscans, who were more straitened for it than himself, he even walked back with them half a mile in order to complete an interesting conversation. He watched a drum-maker, who was making drums for the fairs of Beaucaire and Tarascon, enquiring of him the principles that underlay the instruments, not because he wished to know them, but because he wished to see the working of a peasant’s mind in an attempt to explain them. Of a gossip he bought a hand-basket of Provence figs for five sous. Though a very small trade, it gave him another and finer opportunity to study the peasant in a case of abstract reasoning; for, on lifting the vine-leaves, he discovered beneath the figs two dozen of eggs, which the old woman had forgotten. Thereupon arose a nice question of property: To whom belonged the eggs? It

might be said that the eggs were Sterne's, inasmuch as he had paid for the space they occupied. Against this position it might be said with equal justice that he had not purchased eggs, and so they could not be his. Sterne was quite willing to resign all claim to the eggs; but then arose a still nicer question: To whom belonged the basket? The question puzzled alike the philosopher and the peasant; for without the basket to carry them in, neither the eggs nor the figs had any value.

Sauntering along in this delightful fashion, Sterne made a spurt somewhere between Avignon and Beaucaire, and caught up with the chaise in time to share in the second serious mishap since leaving Paris. It was towards the end of July, the gala week at the fair of Beaucaire. "Can you conceive", he wrote in his amusing way to Foley, "a worse accident than that in such a journey, in the hottest day and hour of it, four miles from either tree or shrub which could cast a shade of the size of one of Eve's fig leaves—that we should break a hind wheel into ten thousand pieces, and be obliged in consequence to sit five hours on a gravelly road, without one drop of water, or possibility of getting any—To mend the matter, my two postillions were two dough-hearted fools, and fell a crying.—Nothing was to be done! By heaven, quoth I, pulling off my coat and waistcoat, something shall be done, for I'll thrash you both within an inch of your lives—and then make you take each of you a horse, and ride like two devils to the next post for a cart to carry my baggage, and a wheel to carry ourselves—Our luggage weighed ten quintals—'twas the fair of Baucaire—all the world was going, or returning—we were ask'd by every soul who pass'd by us, if we were going to the fair of Baucaire—no wonder, quoth I, we have goods enough! *vous avez raison, mes amis.*"

The next post, whither the postillions were sent for cart and chaise, was indeed Beaucaire. Thence the unfortunate travellers proceeded to Nîmes and Lunel, where Sterne closed his narrative in the exquisite idyl of Nannette and the village dance which he took part in at the end of a sultry day.

Under the inspiration of the roundelay which he heard that evening——

“Viva la joia!

“Fidon la tristessa!”——

he danced all the way, he would have us understand, from Lunel to Montpellier, “where there is the best Muscatto wine in all France”—and thence on through Narbonne and Carcassonne to his habitation at Toulouse.

CHAPTER XIV

A GENTLEMAN OF FRANCE

AUGUST 1762—MAY 1764

THE ancient capital of Languedoc stretches along the right bank of the Garonne, crossed by the noble Pont-Neuf. The centre of the town was then, as it is now, the Place du Capitole, the seat of the municipal government. Near-by were the University founded by Pope Gregory the Ninth, and the Museum of Fine Arts, with the academies of science and belles-lettres. From the Capitole, streets ran off in all directions, terminating at the north in the beautiful church of St. Sernin, the pride of Toulouse, and at the south in the Parliament buildings, stately mansions, and extensive gardens and suburbs. To the southwest was the Cathedral of St. Etienne, over which presided Loménie de Brienne, to become Minister of Finance under Louis the Sixteenth. On his arrival early in the second week of August, 1762, Sterne was pleased with the town beyond anticipation. The Abbé Mackarty had rented for him a large and well-furnished house from Monsieur Sligniac, apparently on the outer edge of the southern quarter, and had attended to all those little details necessary to a stranger's comfort. As soon as he had unpacked and looked about him, Sterne wrote to Hall-Stevenson on the twelfth of August.

"Here I am in my own house, quite settled by M[ackarty]'s aid, and good-natured offices, for which I owe him more than I can express or know how to pay at present. —'Tis in the prettiest situation in Toulouse, with near two acres of garden. * * * I have got a good cook—my wife a decent *femme de chambre*, and a good-looking *laquais*. —The Abbé has planned our expences, and set us in such a train, we cannot easily go wrong—tho' by the bye, the d—l is seldom found sleeping under a hedge."

And two days later he gave Foley other details:

“Well! here we are after all, my dear friend—and most deliciously placed at the extremity of the town, in an excellent house well furnish’d and elegant beyond anything I look’d for——’Tis built in the form of a *hôtel*, with a pretty court towards the town—and behind, the best gardens in Toulouse, laid out in serpentine walks, and so large that the company in our quarter usually come to walk there in the evenings, for which they have my consent——‘the more the merrier.’——The house consists of a good *salle à manger* above stairs joining to the very great *salle à compagnie* as large as the Baron d’Holbach’s; three handsome bed-chambers with dressing rooms to them——below stairs two very good rooms for myself, one to study in, the other to see company.——I have moreover cellars round the court, and all other offices——Of the same landlord I have bargained to have the use of a country-house which he has two miles out of town, so that myself and all my family have nothing more to do than take our hats and remove from the one to the other.——My landlord is moreover to keep the gardens in order——and what do you think I am to pay for all this? neither more or less than thirty pounds a year.”

Alternating between his *hôtel* and country-house, Sterne entered upon the life of a French gentleman, at the small expense, as his wife estimated, of two hundred and fifty pounds a year. Connected with his country-house was “a handsome pavillion”, which he renamed Pringello’s Pavillion in honour of Don Pringello, the fanciful title of an architect whom Hall-Stevenson had recently celebrated in *Crazy Tales*, as one of the Demoniacs. Within easy distance was similarly established the eccentric William Hewitt whom Sterne had met at Skelton and Scarborough. The two families were constantly passing to and fro for dinner or supper. Between meals Sterne took to drinking ass’s milk in the morning and cow’s milk in the evening, a diet which was recommended to him in this way by the physicians. In the heat of summer there was little society at Toulouse, for the French gentlemen were away in the country, and the usual English colony was scattered at various resorts and in travel. With nothing thus

to distract him, Sterne sat down in his study or his pavillion to *Tristram Shandy*, in the hope that another instalment might be completed for the next London season. He did not begin, as is quite evident, with the seventh volume, which describes the tour through France from Calais. Notes he had made for the journey, but it had not occurred to him that his travels could be grafted into *Tristram Shandy*. They were to form, as first designed, a work separate and distinct. His imagination was away in Shandy Hall and Yorkshire, with my uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, and the widow Wadman, on a day in mid-August when he unscrewed his inkhorn under the "genial sun" of Toulouse, in the "clear climate of fantasy and perspiration". Hall-Stevenson's *Crazy Tales* lay before him. Ten times a day he looked at the curious frontispiece of Skelton Castle; and with his face turned towards its turret, so near as the direction could be made out, he plunged into my uncle Toby's amours, comprising the eighth book of *Tristram Shandy*.

He advanced only a short distance, hardly beyond the opening "crazy" chapters, containing a mad address to his readers in imitation of Rabelais, and a claim that his method of composition was "the most religious", if not the best in the world; "for I begin with writing the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God for the second". While in this exultant mood, he "fell ill of an epidemic vile fever, which killed hundreds" about him. For six weeks he lay between life and death, attended by the local physicians, whom he declared "the errantest charletans in Europe". "I withdrew", he wrote to Hall-Stevenson in October, "what was left of me out of their hands, and recommended my affairs entirely to Dame Nature—She (dear goddess) has saved me in fifty different pinching bouts, and I begin to have a kind of enthusiasm now in her favour, and in my own, That one or two more escapes will make me believe I shall leave you all at last by translation, and not by fair death."

Sterne soon became as "stout and foolish" as ever, and resumed my uncle Toby's amours, while the Abbé Mackarty was out vintaging, and Lydia was "hard at it with music, dancing, and French speaking". As he sat at his table

with a bottle of Frontiniae and glass at his side for a pledge to Hall-Stevenson, he thought that he had as good reason for being contented as the rest of his household. But Toulouse somehow, he could not quite explain it, was no longer to his taste. Had it not run counter to one of his hypotheses, he would have laid his weariness to the climate, for the hot summer was being followed by a bitter cold autumn, which obliged him and his family "to sit with whole pagells of wood lighted up to our noses". In searching for a cause of his ennui, he finally attributed it to "the eternal platitude of the French character". Everybody was civil to him, but civility with no variety in it wearied and "boddered" him to death. To put him into spirits once more, he longed for a visit from Tollot—who was again in Paris with Sir Charles Danvers,—in order that he might die, not of ennui, but of laughter.

On the approach of winter, Sterne's gaiety returned without the aid of Sir Charles. French society doubtless improved as soon as families of rank left their chateaux and came in for the season and the local parliament. The Comtesse de Fumel and Monsieur Bonrepos received on several days every week; and the Baron d'Orbessan, President of the assembly, kept open house to which all were welcome, whether French or foreigners.* Of these people, Sterne mentions only Dr. Jamme, a lawyer and man of letters; but he must have been an *habitué* of all the more fashionable salons, as were Tollot and Hall-Stevenson when they visited Toulouse. They particularly liked the Baron d'Orbessan, who was himself something of a Demoniac. Many English travellers, who had been running about Europe, fixed upon Toulouse for the whole or a part of the winter. There was a happy society of them distributed about in lodgings, and gyrating around the *hôtels* of the Sternes and the Hewitts. Among them, as they came and went through the winter, was a shadowy Mrs. M—— (Meadows, perhaps), with whom the Sternes sometimes dined; and a Mr. Woodhouse, "a most amiable worthy man", who stopped on his way to Italy, and whom Sterne took into his

* W. Durrant Cooper, *Seven Letters written by Sterne and his Friends*, 6 (London, 1844).

own house. Every night they were all together at one place or another, "fiddling, laughing and singing, and cracking jokes". Early in December they all went to Hewitt's, "living together like brothers and sisters", and practising a play for the Christmas holidays, a diversion which had been suggested by Sterne as a *soulagement*. Towards the middle of the month, as luck would have it, a company of English strollers arrived in Toulouse to act comedies, if an audience could be found. On Sterne's initiative, the two groups of amateurs united forces and shifted their scene of action over to his great *salle à compagnie*. After a fortnight in making costumes and in learning their parts, they presented there Mrs. Centlivre's *Busy Body*, with a grand orchestra improvised for the occasion. The next week they played Vanbrugh and Cibber's *Journey to London*, which Sterne, if he carried out his design, rewrote in part, turning it into *A Journey to Toulouse*. It is all very pretty to see Yorick in the rôle of playwright and stage-manager and possibly actor.

The rest of the winter passed in interchange of visits; and when the English colony began to break up in the spring, the Sternes all went to the Hewitts' country home for a week or fortnight. But we have no further festivities to relate, for Yorick was becoming depressed again. His purse was empty. Since settling with Mrs. Sterne, Becket had sold up to April, 1763, only 182 copies of the last *Shandys*, and after that the sale came to a stand-still. "Ten cart-loads" of the volumes, Sterne said, still remained on their hands. That estimate was an exaggeration for 991 sets, enough, none the less, to disappoint him of a hundred pounds which he had expected at this time. So Sterne had to depend upon remittances out of Yorkshire, which were obviously inadequate for his mode of life. He was spending more than twice the clear income from his rents and parishes. By December he was reduced to "half a dozen guineas"; and in March he had only "five Louis to vapour with in this land of coxcombs". Foley, his banker, though very kind and considerate, naturally hesitated to advance the small sums which Sterne succeeded, however, in coaxing from him month after month. To poverty of purse was added poverty of spirit. During the winter, Sterne worked inter-

mittently at *Tristram*, and revised more of his old sermons, perhaps writing new ones, with a view to publication; but his progress had been slow. April came and nothing was ready for the press; nothing could be sent over to Becket for further revenue.

Behind this double bankruptcy, financial and intellectual, which threatened Sterne, lay the wretched state of his health. Toulouse, ill-drained and subject to cold and damp winds in winter, had not agreed with him at all. True, there were days extending into weeks when he felt well, and imagined that the dread disease had been arrested, for there were as yet no returns of the hemorrhages of last summer. In these periods he went on with his literary work, and wrote "long nonsensical" letters to Hall-Stevenson, as if completely reinstated in health and spirits; but such was really not the case. Over against the joyous letters to the master of Skelton, should be set one to Archbishop Drummond in May, 1763, dismal in its forebodings and yet flashing with humour:

"I have been fixed here with my family these ten months, and by God's blessing it has answered all I wished for, with regard to my daughter; I cannot say so much for myself, having since the first day of my arrival here been in a continual warfare with agues, fevers, and physicians—the first brought my blood to so poor a state, that the physicians found it necessary to enrich it with strong bouillons, and strong bouillons and soups à santé threw me into fevers, and fevers brought on loss of blood, and loss of blood agues—so that as *war begets poverty, poverty peace*, etc. etc.—has this miserable constitution made all its revolutions; how many more it may sustain, before its last and great one, God knows—like the rest of my species, I shall fence it off as long as I can. I am advised now to try the virtues of the waters of Banyars, and shall encamp like a patriarch with my whole household upon the side of the Pyreneans this summer and winter at Nice; from whence in spring I shall return home, never, I fear, to be of service, at least as a preacher. I have preached too much, my Lord, already; and was my age to be computed either by the number of sermons I have preached, or the infirmities they have brought upon me, I might be

truly said to have the claim of a *Miles emeritus*, and was there a Hôtel des Invalides for the reception of such established upon any salutary plain betwixt here and Arabia Felix, I would beg your Grace's interest to help me into it—as it is, I rest fully assured in my heart of your Grace's indulgence to me in my endeavours to add a few quiet years to this fragment of my life—and with my wishes for a long and happy one to your Grace, I am, from the truest veneration of your character,—Your most dutiful servant, L. Sterne."

The cause to which Sterne assigned his physical collapse cannot be taken at full value, though he had indeed innumerable sermons to his credit. He might surely have preached on for another decade, but for *Tristram Shandy* and the indiscretions that followed in its wake. His letter, for what it said and for what it left unsaid, was most admirable as a request that he be released from all further parish duties. As he told his archbishop, he was going to Bagnères-de-Bigorre at the foot of the French Pyrenees to try the waters and a higher altitude. There was also another motive for the journey. *Tristram Shandy* could not continue much further on the lines it had been running. It had been Sterne's first design, according to John Croft, to travel Mr. Tristram Shandy over Europe, making under this disguise remarks and strictures on the different peoples and governments, and closing with an eulogium on England and her superior constitution. Sterne's mind now began to revert to the original design as modified by a sojourn abroad. From politics, his interest had shifted to men and manners, of which he would give a comic rendering. At Bagnères, he expected "much amusement from the concourse of adventurers from all corners of the earth"; and after exhausting Bagnères, it was his plan to cross the Pyrenees and spend a week in Spain, where he could collect in that time enough material "for a fertile brain to write a volume upon". At the end of the spa season in September, he was to return and winter somewhere in southern France or in Italy, perhaps at Nice or at Florence, almost anywhere except at Toulouse.

But the financial problem stared him in the face. Towards the end of March, he received from England a draft

for £130, which he turned over to his Paris banker. At best, this remittance satisfied current debts and carried him through the spring at Toulouse. Eager to set out on his journey, he wrote to Foley on April 29, asking for a fortnight's credit and explaining his method of payment. His agent at York—Chapman, no doubt,—was to send up to London “a bill for four score guineas”, with orders that it be paid into the hands of Foley's correspondent; and in the same way £20, presumably from Becket on the *Shandys*, was to be placed at his London account. All this would take time. “Therefore”, said the request to the banker, “be so good as to give me credit for the money for a few posts or so, and send me either a rescription for the money, or a draught for it.” Three weeks passed with no reply; and then, on May 21, Sterne sent a sharp note to Foley:

“It is some disappointment to me that you have taken no notice of my letter, especially as I told you we waited for the money before we set out for Bagnieres—and so little distrust had I that such a civility would be refused me, that we have actually had all our things pack'd up these eight days, in hourly expectation of receiving a letter.—Perhaps my good friend has waited till he heard the money was paid in London—but you might have trusted to my honour—that all the cash in your iron box (and all the bankers in Europe put together) could not have tempted me to say the thing *that is not*. * * * Mr. R[ay] of Montpellier, tho' I know him not, yet knows enough of me to have given me credit for a fortnight for ten times the sum. * * * After all, I heartily forgive you—for you have done me a signal service in mortifying me, and * * * I am determined to grow rich upon it. Adieu, and God send you wealth and happiness.”

To this letter, Foley duly responded with an enclosure for eighty or a hundred pounds. The real cause of the previous delay, the banker averred, was no distrust of Sterne, but merely distraction “with a multitude of business”. Sterne accepted good-naturedly the excuse, and in turn apologised for his testy temper, saying that his grievance was mostly imaginary, as he had in his pocket Mr. Ray's letter of credit for £200, which he could use on a pinch. Three days after

receiving Foley's remittance—on June 12,—the Sternes took chaise for Bagnères, in company with Mrs. M[eadows], who was going to another resort in the Pyrenees. The visit to Bagnères, so far as we have any record of it, is almost an intellectual blank in Sterne's life. Only one of his published letters bears the superscription of that place; and that is merely a request to Becket, dated July 15, 1763, to send him a bill on Foley for whatever *Shandys* may have been sold. The pleasures of Bagnères, he said, however, the next year, were not so "exalted" as those of Scarborough in the society of "Lord Granby and Co." The clue to his disappointment is given in an unpublished letter from Montpellier later in the year to a Mr. Mills, merchant in Philpot Lane, London. From the moment he left Toulouse, Sterne never had a moment's respite from ill-health, and subsequently the "thin Pyreanean air brought on continual breeches of vessels" in his lungs.

The journey into Spain was obviously abandoned, though we have no positive statement either way. His condition in nowise improved, Sterne left Bagnères with his family as early as the first of September—two weeks before the time set for departure—and began a course of travels through southern France in search of a comfortable place to camp in for the next winter. There were times when he "risked", according to the letter to Mills, "being taken up for a spy", so suspicious was the aspect he bore in the character of a wanderer, "now prying here, now there", as Pope would say. The patriarch first retraced his steps to Toulouse, where he was made happy by an order from Foley upon his correspondent to pay Mr. Sterne fifteen hundred livres, should the gentleman be in need of it. Sterne needed the sum and accepted it as a "friendly act of civility", prompted by the generous heart of his banker. A filled purse sent the Sternes on to Montpellier, with stops and digressions all along the route. This town, which they had passed through before, must have pleased them for several reasons. Like Toulouse, it always had its English colony in the winter; and it was pleasantly situated on a slope whence were visible mountains and sea. We may wonder, too, whether it ever occurred to Sterne that

Master Rabelais took his Baccalaureate degree in Medicine at the University of Montpellier and lectured there on Galen and Hippocrates. To Montpellier were found, however, two objections. Provisions there were "a third dearer than at Toulouse", and the place had "a bad character * * * as the grave of consumptive people". So the Sternes quickly broke camp for Aix and Marseilles, making the usual long detours. Aix, the capital of Provence, Sterne disliked because Toulouse had already given him a surfeit of parliaments. Marseilles, then a small town running about the old port, with wooded hills for background, was attractive enough; but house rent and cost of living were "enormous". "I could not take", said Sterne, "the most miserable apartments under nine or ten guineas a month", and everything else was "in proportion". Balancing the *pour* and the *contre* for each of the places which they had visited, Sterne decided upon Montpellier; and posted directly thither with his household. His purse was, of course, the determining factor in the account. As for life and death, he said, "I love to run hazards rather than die by inches".

The Sternes returned to Montpellier near the end of September. By taking apartments instead of a house—evidently their plan—they should have lived as cheaply, though not as luxuriously, as at Toulouse. Good lodgings on the hill, accommodating two or three persons, were obtainable for three guineas a month; and meals, without wine, cost a family of that number about ten livres a day. The local markets were "well supplied with fish, poultry, butcher's meat, and game, at reasonable rates". The ordinary wine of the district, if one wished to drink it, was exceedingly cheap; while the sweet wine of Frontignan, Yorick's favourite next to burgundy, was made near Cette, the seaport of Montpellier. The city was also famous for the distillation of pleasant drams or liqueurs of various sorts. Sterne, if he managed well, certainly had no cause for complaint.

A sojourn in Montpellier, though very like one at Toulouse, afforded greater variety of scene and character. "Four or five" English families stayed through the winter, taking houses or apartments near one another for free inter-

course; but who they were we do not know, except that the Hewitts seem to have migrated hither so as to be with their friends. In the town resided also an English physician named Fitzmaurice, "a very worthy sensible" practitioner, and a "Mr. Ray, an English merchant and banker, * * * a gentleman of great probity and worth", who cashed the bills of his countrymen, looked after their letters, and helped them over all troubles. Sterne formed "a particular friendship", too, with a man who was buying up the wines of the present vintage to ship to London. Of his friend he wrote to the Earl of Fauconberg and offered to send over a couple of hogsheads as a present, provided his lordship would pay the duty thereon. The inhabitants of Montpellier were happy and prosperous, as a stranger might quickly see by a walk through the narrow streets on a pleasant evening; for he would observe all along his way "the better sort of both sexes" sitting out on the stone seats by their doors, "conversing with great mirth and familiarity", with here and there a group singing a roundelay accompanied by the violin. To the east of the town, by the gate of the citadel, was a long esplanade, where people gathered every day to take the air, and to the east was the *Peyrou*, a still more agreeable promenade, whence one obtained a view of the Cévennes on the one side and of the Mediterranean on the other. The beautiful prospects and the pure elastic air attracted Sterne on first sight, for they would be, he thought, temptations to take him out of doors like the rest. At this time the town was garrisoned by two battalions, of which one was "the Irish regiment of Berwick, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tents", who treated the English with great politeness and hospitality. The social season opened with two concerts a week at the theatre, called the *Comédie*, in the *place* of the same name; and these entertainments were followed by a line of comedies as at Toulouse, performed, it may be, by the identical company of strollers. When Sterne berated Toulouse and Aix as parliament towns which he could no longer endure, he seems to have forgotten that Montpellier was one also. As in the other provincial capitals, the season reached its height at Montpellier when the states of Languedoc assembled at the

Hôtel de Ville in gorgeous processions and ceremonies, which Sterne called "a fine raree-shew, with the usual accompaniments of fiddles, bears, and puppet-shews". Then came, closing the winter, a succession of dinners and receptions given by the governor and other high officials.

Now and then English tourists who were moving about southern France through the winter, stopped at Montpellier for a week or so, staying at the Cheval Blanc or going into furnished lodgings. In November arrived Smollett the novelist, all worked out and suffering from asthma, in company with his wife and two other English ladies. Though on the way from Paris to Nice, he made the long detour to lay the case of his health before Dr. Antoine Fizes, a climatologist of wide renown, "the Boerhaave of Montpellier", as he was called. Fearing the results of a personal encounter with the learned physician, who was reported arrogant in deportment, Smollett consulted him by means of a long letter in Latin, and received in reply, to his disgust, a long letter in French. The novelist proved the physician's diagnosis false, turned with loathing from the usual prescription of bouillons and ass's milk, and savagely denounced the "great lanthorn of medicine" as a knave and arrant humbug. Unfortunately for Montpellier, a week's rain set in a few days after Smollett's arrival, "leaving the air so loaded with vapours that there was no walking after sunset, without being wetted by the dew almost to the skin". There were, however, some bright days during Smollett's visit, and he said many interesting things about the city, its sociable inhabitants and their customs, upon which we have based largely our account as a background to Sterne's life there.

The novelist was especially pleased at his reception by the English residents, who made it a point to call upon all newcomers. Did Sterne, like the rest, pay his formal respects to the man whose review had slashed his jerkin year after year? We have no direct information on that point; but neither Sterne nor Smollett could have let literary animosities interfere with the etiquette prescribed for gentlemen. The novelist, as he definitely stated, met and conversed with Mrs.

Sterne,* who told him incidentally about a young consumptive among their friends, a Mr. Oswald of London, that came over for the treatment of the celebrated climatologist. After a month of it, Oswald said to the doctor one day: "I take your prescriptions punctually; but, instead of being the better for them, I have now not an hour's remission from the fever in the four-and-twenty.—I cannot conceive the meaning of it." The doctor replied that the reason should be plain, for "the air of Montpellier was too sharp for his lungs, which required a softer climate". "Then you are a sordid villain", retorted the young man, "for allowing me to stay here till my constitution is irretrievable." A few weeks later Oswald died in the neighbourhood of Toulouse. On hearing this dismal story, Smollett, who feared consumption for himself, packed up and hastened to Nice.

The next month Sterne received a visit from a group of his most intimate friends, and missed the sight of others whom he would have been glad to see. In the previous summer, Tollot had taken the road with Thornhill and a younger brother, both of London, and a Mr. Garland, who will be remembered as one of the Demoniacs. From Paris, they went into Belgium, where Garland left them at Brussels for home; while the others, after six weeks at Spa, journeyed leisurely through Lorraine and Alsace into Switzerland, as far south as Geneva, to call upon their friend Rousseau; and thence they turned west to Lyons for a circular tour of southern France to Bordeaux and round to Paris again. At Lyons, they fell in with Hewitt and Charles Turner, a sporting Yorkshire squire of Kirkleatham near Skelton, who was taking his wife to Aix for the winter. They all went south at the same time, some by chaise and others by boat. At Avignon the party divided, Hewitt for Montpellier and the rest for Aix. After being snowed in at Aix for a fortnight, Tollot and the Thornhills proceeded to Montpellier. They were delighted—Tollot is the spokesman in a letter to Hall-Stevenson—to see again the "*bon et agréable* Tristram", whom they found apparently enjoying himself to the full, just as at Paris two years before.

* Smollett, *Travels through France and Germany*, in *Works*, edited by W. E. Henley, 128 (London, 1900).

But they pitied him for the persecutions of a wife who jealously followed him everywhere, causing him, they fancied, many unhappy moments, which he bore nevertheless with "the patience of an angel". In a word, the *bonne dame* was from their point of view *de trop*. On learning from Sterne that he was about to return to his "other wife", meaning thereby his church at Coxwold, Tolloi invited him to his own *hôtel* and table at Paris, and promised to conduct him safely back to England with his other friends.*

When the company broke up in anticipation of a joyous reunion at Paris, Sterne regarded himself in perfect health, despite the attack of rain, mists, and snows. But as ever, he was again deceived as to his real condition. On January 5, 1764, he began a letter to Foley, and, when halfway through it, broke off to take a ride on the road towards Pézenas. His beast proved to be "as unmoveable as Don Quixote's wooden-horse"; no motion was to be got out of him at all except by continued lashings, which "half dislocated" Sterne's arm, until his head was turned homeward; and then he struck into a trot. The exertion on a chilly morning brought on a fever, which confined Sterne to his bed for more than a week. Not till the fifteenth was he able to finish the letter to his banker, in which he said: "I have suffered in this scuffle with death terribly—but unless the spirit of prophecy deceive me—I shall not die but live—in the meantime, dear Foley, let us live as merrily but *as innocently* as we can—It has ever been as good, if not better, than a bishoprick to me—and I *desire no other*." During a month of convalescence, Sterne was put through the customary course of treatment, either under Dr. Fizes or under the local faculty who had acquired the art of medicine from his practice. "My physicians", he wrote on the first of February, "have almost poisoned me with what they call *bouillons rafraichissants*—'tis a cock flayed alive and boiled with poppy seeds, then pounded in a mortar, afterwards pass'd through a sieve—There is to be one crawfish in it, and I was gravely told it must be a male one—a female would do me more hurt than good." At the end of the period, the physicans informed

* Cooper, *Seven Letters*, 5.

him, just as Dr. Fizes had informed young Oswald, that “the sharp air of Montpellier” would be fatal to him, if he remained longer. “And why, good people”, Sterne replied, “were you not kind enough to tell me this sooner?” While still unable to be out, Sterne was particularly honoured by a call from the Earl of Rochford, who was passing through Montpellier en route to assume his duties as English Ambassador to the Court of Spain. The two men who met here far from home and conversed of their common friends, must have been old acquaintances; for Lord Rochford, besides being an invariable subscriber to Yorick’s books, was a lavish host in the political set among whom Sterne moved when in London.

One may readily see how events were driving Sterne back to England. Though his life may have been saved by his first hurried journey to Paris, his health, on the whole, had not been benefited by his long sojourn abroad. Indeed, it probably would have been better for him had he never gone to the south of France. From the first he fretted under his inability to proceed with *Shandy* and thus lay another tax—as he always expressed it—upon the public, so necessary to the support of his family. Hopeless on this score, he sent his books back to England the previous spring by way of Bordeaux, addressed in care of Becket his publisher. Not a chapter, so far as one knows, did he add to his work while staying at Montpellier. His financial as well as his physical condition had grown worse and worse. How he got through the winter would be a puzzle, did we not know Sterne as a skilful borrower. As early as November 24, 1763, he wrote to Mills, the London merchant, requesting that he might draw upon him to the extent of fifty pounds. As for surety, he said “the whole Shandean family” will stand bound for the capital; and as to immediate prospects, “you shall be paid the very first money God sends”. He was doubtless helped out, as his letters would imply, by Foley, Ray, and other friends with whom he was living “as brothers”. Really thrice a bankrupt, in purse, health, and intellect, Sterne wisely decided to manage henceforth as best he could in England, and to make another effort at *Tristram Shandy* in the quiet of Coxwold.

In carrying out this design, Mrs. Sterne strangely stood in the way. Whenever her husband suggested, as he had been doing for a year, a return to England, she pleaded her own welfare and her daughter's. Her rheumatism troubled her less in France than at home, and Lydia should stay on and complete her education. This opposition of wishes, though not "as sour as lemon" was not, in Sterne's phrase, "as sweet as sugar". Out of patience with her view of the situation, Sterne finally told his wife, after his last illness at Montpellier, that he was going back to Coxwold as soon as he should be able, but that she might remain on with Lydia for another two or three years, if she chose to do so. He clearly saw the financial and social difficulties of a separate maintenance, and agreed to it only with great reluctance when brought to his wit's end. His wife and daughter were to go to Montauban, north from Toulouse, for the present, and if they wished, they might spend the summer at Bagnères. As first planned, he was to return by way of Geneva, for a visit doubtless with Rousseau and Voltaire, and "then fall down the Rhine to Holland", whence he could embark directly for Hull and avoid the temptations of Paris and London. But the generous offer of Tollot to share with him his apartments and table at Paris evidently determined him to retrace his steps by the old route. About the first of March, 1764, or as soon as he received his Christmas remittance from Coxwold, Sterne turned his face towards home "in high spirits * * * except for a tear at parting with my little slut", his affectionate name for Lydia. With his wife he left a hundred louis for pocket money, and promised her two hundred guineas a year.

Sterne traversed the road back to Paris without any incident he thought worth recording. On his arrival, in the second or third week of March, he went directly to the Hôtel d'Enragues, in the Rue Tournon near the Luxembourg, where were established Tollot and the Thornhills. With these "good and generous souls", though Tollot was continually out of sorts with the cold spring, Sterne lived "a most jolly nonsensical life" for two months and more. Across the Seine, in the Rue St. Nicaise, was their friend John Wilkes, who had

recently been expelled from the House of Commons. Like many others, they regarded him as a martyr to free speech. Sterne and Wilkes often met, and on one occasion formed "an odd party"* with the "goddesses of the theatre", at the house of one Hope, whom the politician described as "a Dutchman metamorphosed into an Italian" by long residence in Rome and Venice. Much in their company, too, was Stephen Fox, "dissipating the ill-got fleeting wealth of his father". In the summer Lord Holland came abroad with his younger son, Charles James Fox; but that was too late for the humourist to fall in with them. Every day Sterne saw also Lawson Trotter, the Jacobite outlaw, who, despite exile, was "eternally joyous and jocundissimus". To complete the scene of Yorick's immediate society, he was "smitten with the tenderest passion that ever tender wight underwent". Once, twice, and thrice every day, when no other amusement was at hand, Sterne trudged off to this woman's *hôtel* for sentimental converse. Before the spring was over, she went to the south of France, and therewith ended the comedy.

It is to be presumed that Sterne renewed his intimacy with French society, revisiting the salons of d'Holbach, Suard, the Comte de Bissy, and the Prince de Conti, where he had been so cordially received on his first coming to Paris. On this point, however, the meagre correspondence covering the period is silent. One misses greatly letters like those of two years before to Garrick, with whom he lost touch during a long absence. A letter to Garrick would doubtless have told us about "the uncommon applause" with which Voltaire's *Olympie* was greeted at the Comédie Française in March, and about the decorations, which were "allowed to be the most magnificent and striking that ever were exhibited on that stage".† The few letters that we have of these months relate to family affairs or to the English colony. Two years before, there was hardly a score of English gentlemen in Paris and they were mostly birds of passage. Sterne, on account of his literary prestige, then easily became the lion of the season.

* Letter of Wilkes to Charles Churchill, dated Paris, April 10, 1764, in *Wilkes's Correspondence with Churchill*.—British Museum. *Additional Manuscripts*, 30,878.

† *London Chronicle*, March 29-31, 1764.

In the meantime all was changed. Since the peace, says Horace Walpole, the way to Paris had become, "like the description of the grave, * * * the way of all flesh". To pay the expenses of the English who flocked thither, Foley was receiving every month out of England £30,000 in remittances.* An example for this display was set by the new Ambassador, the Earl of Hertford, a man of great wealth and generosity, who took for his residence the Hôtel de Lauragnais,† a large and luxurious mansion near the Louvre. With him was his son Lord Beauchamp, an amiable young man whom everybody liked; and there still hovered about the embassy Lord Tavistock, son of the Duke of Bedford who had signed the articles of peace. Around these men centered the most fashionable English society. Every English gentleman, on coming to Paris, called at the embassy, and Lord Hertford returned the call, with invitations to dinners and receptions and to his Sunday chapel at the Hôtel de Lauragnais. No one was ostracised on account of political opinions. Lawson Trotter, who dared not step foot in England, might be seen almost any day at the embassy; and even Wilkes, convicted of libel against his Majesty's government, was tolerated, though with maimed rites. Sterne, who was an especial favourite, dined almost every week with the Ambassador or Lord Beauchamp or Lord Tavistock.

Lord Hertford brought over with him as his Secretary, though the appointment was not quite official, Hume, the philosopher and historian. The choice seemed very odd to everybody who did not know Hume thoroughly. Hume was, if one likes to say it, "a coarse, clumsily built" Scotsman, halting and heavy in speech; and as to French, he sometimes could never get, if at all embarrassed, beyond *Eh bien! vous voilà*. And yet beneath this rough exterior was a man morally sound to the heart, of great and commanding intellect, and in disposition as genial and pliable as the author of *Tristram Shandy*. When Sterne reached Paris, Hume was feeding upon the same ambrosia of which he himself had grown sick two years before. "All the courtiers", wrote

* Walpole, *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, V, 345.

† *London Chronicle*, March 22-24, 1764.

Hume to Adam Smith, "who surrounded me when I was introduced to Madame de Pompadour, assured me that she was never heard to say so much to any man."* A lady at Court, it was rumoured, fell into immediate disgrace for asking who he was. With similar adulation Hume passed through all the great houses, where no reception was complete without him. Chamfort, being asked on one occasion what had become of the lion, replied: "I think he must be dead, for I have seen him only three times to-day." His presence was demanded at masquerades and tableaux and pantomimes; and at the theatre his big head "was usually seen between two pretty faces".

Paris could manage only one great sensation a season. In those days, it was either Sterne, Hume, Walpole, or Garrick, one at a time, never all together. This year Hume, who had the start of Sterne by several months, easily overshadowed him. A secondary rôle, nevertheless, had its honours, one of which Sterne particularly cherished. On a Saturday afternoon in March or April, while he was "playing a sober game of whist with the Thornhills", Lord Hertford's messenger appeared with a request that he preach, on the next morning, in the chapel at the new embassy in place of Dr. James Trail, the dull chaplain. Though Sterne had resolved never to preach more, this invitation could not be refused. He broke abruptly from his amusement, and set himself at once to the task of writing a sermon, on a text that came into his head at a flash without any consideration. The next morning the little chapel was filled with "a concourse of all nations and religions"—diplomats and officials from various embassies, Roman Catholics, Protestants, deists and atheists. Hume was there, and, it is said, d'Holbach and Diderot. The text which Sterne chose on the spur of the moment, was most amusingly inappropriate for anyone except a jester; and yet the preacher seemed unaware of the jest until all was over. His theme, based on 2 Kings xx. 15, was the rebuke that Isaiah administered to Hezekiah for exposing the treasures of the royal palace to the Babylonian ambassadors, and the subse-

* *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, II, 169 (Edinburgh, 1846).

quent prophecy that those treasures would some day be carried away to Babylon. "Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord."

The preacher related, with several fanciful enlargements, the story of Hezekiah's illness and of the miracle that was performed in his behalf. Instead of taking the Scriptures simply, which say that a prince of Babylon sent presents and messengers to Hezekiah to congratulate him upon his recovery, Sterne conjectured a hidden reason for this friendly act of courtesy. "As the Chaldeans", he said naively, "were great searchers into the secrets of nature, especially into the motions of the celestial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that distance, of the strange appearance of the shadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials; * * * so that this astronomical miracle * * * had been sufficient by itself to have led a curious people as far as Jerusalem, that they might see the man for whose sake the sun had forsook his course." From this point, the preacher went on to enquire into the mistake that Hezekiah made in taking the Babylonian ambassadors through the secret rooms of the palace. "Where was the harm", Sterne asked, "in all this?" His conclusion was that God, "who searches into the heart of man", saw in Hezekiah pride and ostentation, not obvious perhaps to mortal vision, though deserving in God's sight, of the severest punishment. This analysis of Hezekiah's character led to the generalisation that most men go abroad "armed inside and out with two motives", one for the world and one for private use—a favourite theory of Sterne's, upon which he proceeded to draw many illustrations from the hypocrites he had observed through his lifetime. Over against these imaginary character-sketches was set, in concluding his discourse, another and smaller group of the really good men and women whom an ungenerous world persists in misunderstanding, as if it would "rob heroes of the best part of their glory—their virtue".

Sterne's honorarium was a dinner that Sunday evening at the English embassy, to which were invited the most distinguished of the congregation. It was presumably on this occasion that "a prompt French marquis", as related in the

Sentimental Journey, mistook Hume for John Home, author of the once famous tragedy of *Douglas*, whose names were pronounced alike. Sitting beside the ambassador's secretary, the marquis turned to him and enquired whether he was Home the poet. "No, said Hume—mildly—*Tant pis*, replied the Marquis. It is Hume the historian, said another—*Tant mieux*, said the Marquis. And Mr. Hume, who is a man of excellent heart, return'd thanks for both." This, however, was not the most amusing incident, if it occurred then, of the evening. The real merriment in which all shared, started when Hume began to quiz Yorick slily on Hezekiah and the "astronomical miracle". Sterne, who—never a hypocrite—believed implicitly in miracles, accepted the challenge, while the other guests looked on and listened with delight to the droll combat. The story of the good-natured passage at arms, when it got out, was magnified into a hot dispute; and Sterne, troubled by the idle rumours, set matters right in one of his letters and no doubt in conversation. "*David*", as he put it, "was disposed to make a little merry with the *parson*, and in return the parson was equally disposed to make a little mirth with the *infidel*; we laughed at one another, and the company laughed with us both." Not content with the mere statement of what occurred at Lord Hertford's table, Sterne took the occasion afforded by his letter to pay a most just tribute to the gentle temper of his friendly antagonist. "I should be most exceedingly surprized", he wrote, "to hear that *David* ever had an unpleasant contention with any man;—and if I should be made to believe that such an event had happened, nothing would persuade me that his opponent was not in the wrong; for in my life did I never meet with a being of a more placid and gentle nature; and it is this amiable turn of his character that has given more consequence and force to his scepticism than all the arguments of his sophistry."* The *amende honorable* was quite unnecessary.

Over-exertion resulted in another hemorrhage, which kept Sterne in Paris longer than he had intended to stay. As he

* *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne*, 126-27 (London, 1788).

turned his face once more towards England, for which he was passionately longing, his mind also reverted to his family in the south. On May 15, 1764, he wrote to Lydia, enumerating the presents that had been sent to her, and giving his final directions for her conduct in his absence:

“My dear Lydia * * * I acquiesced in your staying in France—likewise it was your mother’s wish—but I must tell you both (that unless your health had not been a plea made use of) I should have wished you both to return with me.—I have sent you the Spectators, and other books, particularly Metastasio; but I beg my girl to read the former, and only make the latter her amusement.—I hope you have not forgot my last request, to make no friendships with the French women—not that I think ill of them all, but sometimes women of the best principles are the most *insinuating*—nay I am so jealous of you that I should be miserable were I to see you had the least grain of coquetry in your composition.—You have enough to do—for I have also sent you a guittar—and as you have no genius for drawing (tho’ you never could be made to believe it) pray waste not your time about it.—Remember to write to me as to a friend—in short, whatever comes into your little head, and then it will be natural.—If your mother’s rheumatism continues and she chooses to go to Bagnieres—tell her not to be stopped for want of money, for my purse shall be as open as my heart. * * * Kiss your mother from me, and believe me your affectionate L. Sterne.”

CHAPTER XV

YORKSHIRE AND LONDON

TRISTRAM SHANDY: VOLUMES VII AND VIII

JUNE 1764—APRIL 1765

STERNE set out from Paris for home on Thursday, the twenty-fourth of May, in company with the Thornhills, and Tollot, who was going over to England. He should have reached London on the twenty-ninth; but there may have been delays, for the earliest notice of his return was an announcement in the postscript to *Lloyd's Evening Post* for June 2-4, that "The Rev. Mr. Sterne, the celebrated author of *Tristram Shandy*, is arrived from Paris, where he has long resided for his health". The news was taken up and repeated by other newspapers to an extent so unusual as to indicate that Sterne's presence in London at this time came as a surprise. During his long sojourn abroad, he had kept in correspondence with very few of his friends in town. Even Garrick, owing to a misunderstanding, had been dropped after the first weeks in Paris two years before. The coolness—if it may be called so—came about in this way. Sterne wrote to Garrick once or twice from southern France, but received no word in return. Garrick in fact duly replied, but his letters miscarried. Each supposed that he was "scalped" by the other, and so all letters between them ceased. Public interest in Sterne had flagged terribly. Becket sold few or no *Shandys* now, and other publishers were no longer putting out imitations. Indeed the old rumour that Sterne was dead had never been quite laid, as one may see from an occasional letter to the newspapers through the year sixty-three. Somebody, for instance, attacked his memory in *St. James's Magazine*, a literary monthly conducted by Robert Lloyd; whereupon a correspondent, in the issue for July, 1763, vindicated Sterne's character by adapting Gray's

famous elegy to “The Decease of Tristram Shandy”, towards the close of which Sterne was conducted to the Elysian Fields and placed on an embowered seat near Rabelais, Lucian, and Cervantes.

The unexpected guest thus came upon London almost as one returned from the dead. While in town he stayed, along with Tollot, with the Thornhills, who had a house in John Street near Berkeley Square. As it was the tag end of the season, most of Sterne’s old friends were away. Garrick, suffering, like Sterne, a temporary eclipse, was travelling with his wife on the Continent. Foley, who was in London on business, Sterne somehow missed, as if the two men were “two buckets of a well”, passing and drawing away from each other. Three weeks were spent in London and the environs, during which Sterne visited, though he gives no names, such friends as he could find; among whom, we now know, was Reynolds, who granted him a sitting, as the painter’s *Pocket-Book* shows, on Monday, the eleventh of June. In this portrait, overlooked by all writers on Sterne, the humourist was drawn at half-length on canvas measuring thirty by twenty-five inches. Wearing his wig and gown, Sterne took his seat nearly facing Sir Joshua and leaned his right elbow on a table, with the hand supporting his tired head. It was a “very clever portrait * * * in a less uniform tone” than was usual with Reynolds, though lacking in that extraordinary insight into Sterne’s character displayed by the painter four years before.*

After his rest in London, Sterne went down to York alone, where he arrived late in June.† As he intended never to preach again, he passed the next two months idly in and about York. The races in the third week of August, accompanied by balls and concerts at the Assembly Rooms, to which he subscribed this year, gave him an opportunity to see many of his old Yorkshire and more distant friends, including Hall-Stevenson, who came for the festivities.

* This portrait was given by Sterne to Edward Stanley, who bequeathed it to his son-in-law, James Whatman, of Venters, Maidstone. It was engraved by Wivell and by Nagle.—Graves and Cronin, *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Vol. III, 935, IV, 1418.

† *York Courant*, June 26, 1764.

“Mr. Turner” and “Mr. Hall” both entered horses and both lost. Tollot and Hewitt, who had returned to England to look after his estates, were Sterne’s guests. And there were present, among his acquaintances of rank, the Marquis and Marchioness of Rockingham, Lord Fitzwilliam, and Lord Effingham of Surrey.*

As soon as the York races were over, Sterne went out to Coxwold to look after his “few poor sheep in the wilderness”. Within a fortnight he grew uneasy of the quiet life, and decamped to Scarborough, whither were gathering people of quality for the spa season and the September races. Scarborough, at that time the most fashionable of the northern watering-places, is beautifully situated on a lofty cliff overlooking the German Ocean. The cliff, broken by a ravine, runs along in a curve so as to form an immense crescent enclosing a wide expanse of water. Down by the sea was the spa house, with a long line of the newly-invented bathing machines, stretching out in either direction over smooth, hard sand, admirably adapted for promenading, driving, or racing. Thence rose an amphitheatre of streets and buildings, tier above tier, clustering on the north beneath the ruins of an old castle. At this romantic resort Sterne passed three weeks with the Earl of Shelburne and the Marquis of Granby, the politician and the soldier. He would have come away, he said, marvellously improved by the air and waters, had he not debilitated his strength as fast as it was gained, by “playing the good fellow” too much with his noble friends, whose pleasures were found rather exalted. His sojourn at Scarborough was marred only by the absence of Hall-Stevenson, who decided this year to drink the waters of Harrogate.

After these sacrifices to the god of laughter, Sterne settled down in his “philosophical hut” at Coxwold, where various matters of business awaited him. The Archbishop of York, not quite satisfied with James Kilner, the assistant curate of the parish, had delayed his ordination until Sterne’s return from abroad. At the archbishop’s request, Sterne enquired further into the conduct and character of his curate, and

* *York Courant*, August 28, 1764.

reported that "the man is well liked as a quiet and an honest man, and withal as a good reader and preacher". "I believe him", the humourist enlarged on his own part, "a good scholar also—I do not say a graceful one—for his bodily presence is mean; and were he to stand for Ordination before a Popish Bishop, the poor fellow would be disabled by a Canon in a moment." At this time, too, Stephen Croft was taking the first steps towards enclosing and dividing Stillington Common and other waste lands, "containing in the whole, one thousand four hundred acres, or thereabouts". This project demanded Sterne's attention; for, as Vicar of Stillington, he was "entitled to the Tythes of Wool and Lamb, and to all the small Tythes and Vicarial Dues growing, arising, or renewing within the said Parish, and also to two Messuages or Cottages there, and to certain Lands within the said Fields and Ings".*

Presently a letter arrived from Mrs. Sterne, requesting fifty pounds immediately, and complaining of her treatment by Foley's correspondent at Montauban, who, in denying her credit for small amounts, hinted as the reason that she was separated from her husband for life. Sterne at once despatched a sharp letter to his Paris banker, in which he branded as false the ill-natured rumour in circulation at Montauban, and begged of him that Mrs. Sterne have credit up to two hundred guineas and more, should she ask for it. Sterne's heat was a bit Falstaffian, for he already owed his banker nearly a hundred guineas on his wife's account, and had to admit that a bill for fifty pounds could not be sent over just then, as his finances were falling short most unexpectedly. There was good reason for complaint on Sterne's part, though he kept silent, of the extravagance of his wife, who had already received a hundred pounds since his return. By good luck money became plentiful in a month or two, thanks to Becket's advances on the next *Shandys*; and Mrs. Sterne was put at her ease.

In the disposition Sterne made of his time, a scant six weeks, shortened by these interruptions, was allowed for com-

* Stillington Enclosure Act, *Private Acts of Parliament*, 6 George III, c. 16.

pleting *Tristram Shandy*, which had been commenced and broken off at Toulouse. It was about the first of October when he took up in earnest, though he had dallied with it in the summer, the story of my uncle Toby and the widow Wadman, with the manifest intent of running it through the entire instalment of this year. But interest and fancy soon languished, notwithstanding hard cudgelling of his brains, so that by November he had arrived only at the end of one volume. Then he conceived the notion, it is a fair inference from his letters, of fitting into *Tristram Shandy* the comic version of his travels through France, already composed in whole or in part as a separate work or a loose continuation. To this end Sterne substituted Mr. Tristram Shandy for himself or Yorick as the name of the traveller, and let him recall while at Auxerre an earlier tour with the elder Shandys and Corporal Trim. This device for bringing the Shandy household over to the Continent has generally been regarded very maladroit; but—besides the urgent call for something of the kind, if there were to be two volumes this year—Sterne saw a jest on the public, to whom he would give an opportunity, afforded by no other book, of pursuing two journeys through France at one and the same time. In order to lend a semblance of unity to the whole, my uncle Toby's courtship of the widow Wadman was put last, where it would give the final impression. The adjustment completed in this curious way about the middle of November, Sterne received a visit from a London friend recovering from a serious illness, with whom he went over to Skelton Castle for a week or ten days with Hall-Stevenson and his garrison, before leaving for London to try the public once more.

The seventh and eighth volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* duly appeared from Becket's press on Tuesday, January 22, 1765. Each volume bore on its title-page a quotation from Pliny, likely through Burton: *Non enim excursus hic ejus, sed opus ipsum est*, meant as a sly apology for the inclusion of the travels; and at the top of the first numbered page of the seventh volume, the author placed his signature as a guarantee that the wit and humour

were all his own. The price of the set was kept at four shillings.

As the instalment was much slighter than any hitherto put forth, Sterne had to accept a good deal of banter on the score that he was amusing himself at the cost of the public. Smollett's man on the *Critical Review** likened the two tiny volumes to "the invisible cock" which Corporal Trim paid his money to see within the showman's box, though he knew the thing invisible. And Suard, apropos of their appearance, retold the story of the man who advertised that he would put himself into a bottle before the eyes of his audience. On the appointed day, the theatre was thronged with a credulous multitude to behold the wonder; but the droll carried away their money and left the bottle as empty as the last two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*.†

The jest of the journey through France was not very well understood by the general public. As Sterne meant it, this part of his book was "a laughing good-tempered satire against travelling (as *puppies* travel)". To gain the desired effect, he let the thin narrative of his own journey, in which he professed to see nothing and to experience nothing beyond cross-accidents, run through all the customary details of the towns visited, such as the plan and history of Calais, the number of streets in Paris, and the wonders of Lyons—much as one might find them in the guides of Piganiol de la Force, which everybody thought indispensable to a trip abroad. All the scenes and objects which make travelling a delight, he playfully maintained, were not set down in the books; for none had told him that he would meet Janatone at Montreuil, Old Honesty at Lyons, or Nannette on the plains of Languedoc. However much these episodes might be admired for their charm and novelty, it was felt that the crude facts taken from histories and guide-books were mere padding to stuff out a six-penny pamphlet. And the story which Sterne foisted upon his travels—the story of the Abbess of Andoüillet and the little novice Margarita, who divide the syllables of two indecorous words between them to save a sin—brought

* January, 1765.

† Quoted in *London Chronicle*, April 16-18, 1765.

out the current charge of indecency, with a hint that the tale was "picked out of the common Parisian jest-books". In France, however, where the words were employed by every mule-driver, the episode was regarded as light and graceful ridicule of the formal morality which disfigured the cloisters. It far excelled, says Garat, Gresset's *Ver-Vert*, or the verse-tale of a parrot who came to an untimely end among the sisterhood at Nevers for repeating phrases caught on a journey down the Loire.*

The merriment against Sterne was long drawn out in the *Monthly Review* for February, 1765, through a score of pages in irony and burlesque. The reviewer represented himself as going in company with Mr. Shandy on the entire tour through France, and as quizzing him on the salient incidents by the way, and on the sequel describing my uncle Toby's assault, in military form, upon the heart of the widow Wadman. Much sport was made of Death, the long-striding scoundrel dogging their heels, of the adventure with Old Honesty at Lyons, and of the "Story of the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles", which Trim and my uncle Toby lost somewhere between them. "Many choice wits", it was said of Sterne, "have excelled in telling a story, but none ever succeeded so well in *not* telling a story, as the British Rabelais hath done in this notable instance." The reviewer nevertheless appreciated in the main, as Suard and everybody else were doing, many "amazingly clever" anecdotes and episodes. After hearing of Nannette and the vintage dance, he burst into a series of exclamations: "Give me thy hand, dear Shandy! Give me thy heart! What a delightful scene hast thou drawn! What good humour! What ease! What nature!" At length came the passage descriptive of the widow Wadman's lambent eye, which the critic could resist no more than could my uncle Toby:

"It was not, Madam, a rolling eye—a romping or a wanton one—nor was it an eye sparkling—petulant or imperious—of high claims and terrifying exactions, which

* This poem had already appeared in English under the title of *Ver-Vert, or the Nunnery Parrot* (Dodsley, 1759), and must have been as well known to Sterne as to Hall-Stevenson, who imitated its style in *Crazy Tales*.

would have curdled at once that milk of human nature, of which my uncle *Toby* was made up—but 'twas an eye full of gentle salutations—and soft responses—speaking—not like the trumpet stop of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to, holds coarse converse—but whispering soft—like the last low accent of an expiring saint—‘How can you live comfortless, captain *Shandy*, and alone, without a bosom to lean your head on—or trust your cares to?’ ”

The humour of the new volumes was quite sufficient to reinstate Sterne in his former popularity. “*Shandy* sells well”, he wrote in the middle of March, and “I have had a lucrative campaign here.” As in the old time, social engagements, beginning moderately, thickened towards the end until scarcely a moment could be stolen for letters to his family and best friends. His enjoyment during the first months was marred only by the absence of Garrick, who, in his long tour abroad, had swung round to Paris, where he was being overwhelmed with honours. But the actor’s spirits were so blighted by “a terrible malignant fever” while in Germany, that it was uncertain whether he would ever return to the stage. As soon as Sterne found out that Garrick was in Paris, the old correspondence was renewed in full freedom. “I scalp you!—my dear Garrick! my dear friend!—foul befall the man who hurts a hair of your head!” So began one of Sterne’s letters, which drifted off into the recurring burden: “Return, return to the few who love you and the thousands who admire you.—The moment you set your foot upon your stage—mark! I tell it you—by some magic, irresistible power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh, and as strong and feelingly as ever—Nature, with glory at her back, will light up the torch within you—and there is enough of it left, to heat and enlighten the world these many, many, many years.” Frequently through the winter, Sterne occupied his box at Drury Lane, taking along with him the whole party where he dined, to see Powell, whom many thought the equal of Garrick, though that was not Sterne’s opinion. “Powell! good Heaven!” he exclaimed, “give me some one with less smoke and more fire—There are who,

like the Pharisees, still think they shall be heard for *much* speaking. Come—come away, my dear Garrick, and teach us another lesson.” Nor did Sterne forget Mrs. Garrick, who had been likewise seriously ill. She had, it is said, “a real regard” for Mr. Sterne, though she often censured his indiscreet conduct. In recompense, Sterne addressed her as “the best and wisest of the daughters of Eve”, and declared himself ready, after all the women he had seen, to “maintain her peerless” against any champion.

In one of these delightful letters, dated March 16, Sterne explained his plans for meeting the expense of another continental journey. “I am taxing the public”, he told Garrick, “with two more volumes of sermons, which will more than double the gains of Shandy——It goes into the world with a prancing list *de toute la noblesse*——which will bring me in three hundred pounds, exclusive of the sale of the copy——so that with all the contempt of money which *ma façon de penser* has every impress’d on me, I shall be rich in spite of myself: but I scorn, you must know, in the high *ton* I take at present, to pocket all this trash——I set out to lay a portion of it in the service of the world, in a tour round Italy, where I shall spring game, or the deuce is in the dice.——In the beginning of September I quit England, that I may avail myself of the time of vintage, when all nature is joyous, and so saunter philosophically for a year or so, on the other side the Alps.” The labour of gathering in all the polite world for his *Sermons*, Sterne took under his own direction and made it his sole business during the winter. Wherever he dined, one may imagine him requesting the honour of including the names of the guests; and he sent out, as we know, many letters asking for the aid of friends in obtaining subscriptions, that the great list might surpass all others in number and brilliancy. Very characteristic of the letters that have survived was one to Foley, concluding: “Pray present my most sincere compliments to Lady H——, whose name I hope to insert with many others.——As so many men of genius furnish me with their names also, I will quarrel with Mr. Hume, and call him deist, and what not, unless I have his name too——My love to Lord W——. Your name, Foley,

I have put in as a free-will offering of my labours——your list of subscribers you will send——’tis but a crown for sixteen sermons——Dog cheap! but I am in quest of honour, not money.——Adieu, adieu.”

The successful season in town was broken for a few weeks by illness, which sent Sterne, about the middle of March, to the milder climate of Bath to recruit his strength. The fashionable city of the hills, where congregated people of all ranks from the nobility down to tradesmen and adventurers, afforded ample scope for light diversion——gossip and sentimental conversation in the pump-room looking out on the great Roman bath; strolls through the parks and along the parades, if one wished to take the air after drinking the waters; teas and chit-chat in the afternoon; and a concert or ball or theatre, much as one pleased, with which to end the day. Sterne was welcomed to Bath by Lord Cunningham of the Irish peerage, who invited him to his house and introduced him to a company of “his fair countrywomen”, with whom the sentimentalist passed some of the happiest days in his life. In describing the household to a London friend, Sterne wrote: “There is the charming widow *Moor*, where, if I had not a piece of legal meadow of my own, I should rejoice to batten the rest of my days;——and the gentle, elegant *Gore*, with her fine form and Grecian face, and whose lot I trust it will be to make some man happy, who knows the value of a tender heart:——Nor shall I forget another widow, the interesting Mrs. Vesey, with her vocal and fifty other accomplishments.”

Concerning the first two of these beautiful women over from Ireland to set Yorick’s heart aflame, our narrative can say but little. Mrs. Gore must live, I fear, only for “her fine form and Grecian face”. With Mrs. Moor, who had a house of her own at Bath, Sterne kept up a long correspondence, but none of their letters, if published, can now be surely identified through the dashes. Like Mrs. Vesey, she was doubtless a widow only in the sense that she came to Bath without her husband. Mrs. Vesey, it is certain, was none other than Elizabeth Vesey, the famous “Blue-Stocking”, who afterwards brought over her husband from Ireland, got him

into Dr. Johnson's club, and established for herself a coterie in rivalry with Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu's. At this time she had to be content with her house at Lucan near Dublin and with an occasional season in Bath and London. Her "spirit, wit, and vivacity" quickly won Sterne's heart. "Let me ask you, my dearest Mrs. Vesey", he was soon writing to her, "what business you had to come here from Ireland—or rather, what business you have to go back again—the deuce take you with your musical and other powers—could nothing serve you but you must turn T. Shandy's head, as if it was not turn'd enough already;—as for turning my heart, I forgive you, as you have been so good as to turn it towards so excellent and heavenly an object—"*

The sentimental friendship was never dropped, though Mrs. Vesey received a sharp rebuke from the learned and rather prudish Mrs. Carter for the intimacy. Sterne subsequently frequented Mrs. Vesey's "dear blue room" in Bolton Row, and took her to Ranelagh; and when too ill for that, he summoned a chair to convey him to her "warm cabinet", that he might listen alone to her "gentle, amiable, elegant sentiments", delivered "in a tone of voice that was originally intended for a Cherub". On one occasion, when Sterne was unable to leave his lodgings and seemed to be in his last illness, Mrs. Vesey came over to Bond Street and sat by his bedside the whole night, "performing every act of the most friendly and pious attention". As he began to mend, she came again, says Sterne, "in the form of a pitying angel, and made my Tisan for me * * * and played at picquet with me, in order to prevent my attempt to talk, as she was told it would do me harm. * * * In my life did I never see anything—so truly graceful as she is, nor had I an idea, 'till I saw her—that grace could be so perfect in all its parts, and so suited to all the higher ordinances of the first life, from the superintending impulse of the mind". Sterne invited Mrs. Vesey to Coxwold, and they must have met by appointment at Scarborough two years later, when "the Sylph", as she was called, came north to quiet her nerves by change of air and water. In return for the compliment, Sterne

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

promised to visit her and other friends in Ireland, where he had never been since childhood.

Pursuit of the dear "Blue-Stocking" has carried us forward two or three years. To return to Bath, Sterne first met there Gainsborough, then living in the newly-built Circus, a showy amphitheatre of residences on the hill. The painter, say those who knew him, detested books, but read Sterne and wrote like him.* Sterne sat for his admirer. The portrait has never been quite identified; but a Gainsborough purporting to be of Sterne hangs in the Peel Park Museum at Salford. If really Sterne, it is a highly idealised portrait, such as might be painted at a single sitting without much study. The figure, drawn at half-length, is scrupulously dressed, with short wig, and sleeves and front heavy with costly lace. The left hand is concealed, while in the right hand, almost buried in ruffles, a book lies open. A dreamy face tending to the oblong, with full eyes and full lips, gives the impression of soberness, almost of melancholy. The perplexing portrait may be Sterne's; for "Harlequin without his mask", as Thackeray once said, "is known to present a very sober countenance, and was himself, the story goes, the melancholy patient whom the Doctor advised to go and see Harlequin."†

Returning to London before the end of April, Sterne "made a large company merry at Lady Lepell's table during a whole afternoon", by a comic version of his adventures with the Anglo-Irish at Bath. The Lady Lepell at whose table Sterne sat was a daughter of the effeminate John, Lord Herve, so severely satirised by Pope as "that mere white curd of ass's milk". At the time of her marriage with Constantine Phipps, afterwards Baron Mulgrave of New Ross, Ireland, she was, says Walpole, "a fine black girl, but as masculine as her father should be". Her birth and her rank easily made her house the centre round which gyrated Anglo-Irish society. Under the excitement of the occasion, Sterne abandoned himself to his wit, apparently forgetting that Lord

* William Jackson, *The Four Ages*, 160 (London, 1798).

† The Gainsborough portrait is technically described by G. W. Fulcher, *Life of Gainsborough*, 219 (London, 1856). It was presented to the Museum at Salford by Mr. Thomas Agnew.

Cunningham and Mrs. Vesey belonged to the same set. Some umbrage was taken at his ridicule of their friends at Bath, especially by Lady Barrymore, who told the story. Disturbed by the incident, Sterne gracefully apologised for his sallies of wit, saying that he himself was born in Ireland and that he could never have intended ridicule of his "fair country-women". "I did", it was admitted, "talk of them, but as they would wish to be talked of,—with smiles on my countenance, praise on my tongue, hilarity in my heart, and the goblet in my hand."

Never was Sterne more reckless in speech and in conduct than this year. Perhaps it would not do to quote from an unpublished letter* of his in reply to Mrs. Ferguson of Bath, who had enquired of her friends in town whether Tristram Shandy was a married man or no. There is really no harm in the letter in which Tristram Shandy told the "dear lady" that she must answer to her own conscience for the question, but we can not speak with Sterne's freedom nowadays. To conclude, Sterne closed the season with an indiscretion which has long lain heavily against him. The incident has been often related, but with a mistake in time and place, and with undue emphasis on the questionable character of the woman, slightly disguised in the printed correspondence as Lady P——. Among Sterne's acquaintances was Hugh Percy, eldest son of the first Duke of Northumberland, a young man twenty-three years old. He appears among the subscribers to Sterne's sermons as Lord Warkworth. After serving as an officer during the last years of the war with France, Percy was appointed colonel and aide-de-camp to George the Third, and subsequently fought bravely in the war with the American colonies, covering, for instance, the retreat of the British from Lexington and Concord. In the summer of 1764, he married Anne, daughter of the Earl of Bute, who succeeded Pitt as Prime Minister. From the first, the marriage, which finally ended in divorce, did not prosper. Lady Percy quarrelled with her mother-in-law, the old Duchess of Northumberland, and insisted upon inviting her friends to call while Lord Warkworth was away.

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

On one occasion, after many compliments doubtless, Lady Percy told Sterne that she would be glad to include him among her favoured guests. Remembering the invitation on an April afternoon while on his way to dine in her neighbourhood with Mr. Cowper of Wigmore Street, he entered the Mount Coffee-House, called for a sheet of gilt paper, and wrote off a nonsensical letter to Lady Percy, asking if she "would be alone at seven" and suffer him "to spend the evening with her". She was directed to send her reply to Wigmore Street by seven o'clock. "If I hear nothing by that time", said the billet-doux, "I shall conclude you are better disposed of—and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jogg on to the play—Curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but) most sincerely." Though the conduct of Sterne and Lady Percy was far from correct, it matters little whether they passed the evening together or Sterne took a sorry hack to Covent Garden, where Miss Wilford, a beautiful dancer, was to make her début in the regular drama.*

* The letter to Lady Percy has become one of the most famous letters because of Thackeray's use of it in his lecture on "Sterne and Goldsmith" in the *English Humourists*. In editions of Sterne since 1780, this letter has usually appeared among those for the last part of April, 1767. Thackeray referred to it to show that Sterne was only shamming his passion for Mrs. Draper—the Eliza of a series of letters in the spring of 1767. But it is now known that Sterne was too ill at that time to visit Lady Percy or anyone else. In 1766 he was abroad. Hence the only year left for the letter is 1768 or 1765. If he cannot make an engagement with Lady Percy, Sterne says that he is going to Miss * * * * *'s benefit. No unmarried actress had a benefit on a Tuesday in the spring of 1768 before March 18, the date of Sterne's death. But on Tuesday, April 23, 1765, benefits were given to Miss Wright at Drury Lane, and to Miss Wilford at Covent Garden. The seven stars correspond to the letters in the name of Miss Wilford.—See Genest, *History of the Stage*, V, 69; 75.

CHAPTER XVI

YORKSHIRE AND LONDON CONTINUED SERMONS: VOLUMES III AND IV

MAY—OCTOBER 1765

It was the twenty-third of April, as we may figure it out, when Sterne wished to pay a visit to Lady Percy, whose “eyes and lips”, he said, “have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit”. Two days later the Garricks arrived from Paris and went directly to their Hampton villa. Sterne at least saw them, hurried through his business in town, and hastened home earlier than usual, to prepare his sermons for the press in the ensuing September. At York he stayed some days with Hall-Stevenson, who left him “bleeding to death” of a vessel in his lungs. “The deuce take these bellows of mine!” Sterne wrote to the young Earl of Effingham, “I must get ’em stopped, or I shall never have to *persifler* Lord Effingham again.” The hemorrhage which he thus dismissed carelessly, was nevertheless a warning that he must keep quieter than last summer, and be content to oscillate between York and Coxwold, with no thought of Scarborough or Harrogate.

When first seen in his retirement, he was sitting in the summer-house of Shandy Hall, “heart and head” full of his sermons. Near him lay a letter from a Mr. Woodhouse to inform him that he was in love. To draw himself out of the pensive mood of the sermons, Sterne took up the letter for reply, beginning with the value of the passion to a man of his own temperament, an excellent commentary, in passing, on his infatuation for Lady Percy. “I am glad”, said the man of large experience, “that you are in love—’twill cure you at least of the spleen, which has a bad effect on both man and woman—I myself must ever have some *dulcinea* in my head—it harmonises the soul—and in those cases I first

endeavour to make the lady believe so, or rather I begin first to make myself believe that I am in love—but I carry on my affairs quite in the French way, sentimentally—*‘l’amour’* (say they) *‘n’est rien sans sentiment’*.”

Sterne had just received, it appears, and replied to a formal proposal for the hand of his daughter from “a French gentleman of fortune in France”. The marquis, if we may so call him, obtained Sterne’s address from Foley’s correspondent at Montauban, and, without the knowledge of Lydia, wrote to her father that he was deeply in love with her, as a brief prelude to the enquiry: “How much can you give her at present and how much at your death.” The substance of the parent’s amusing reply, Sterne related for the benefit of his friend Woodhouse. “Sir”, was Sterne’s answer, “I will give her ten thousand pounds the day of marriage—my calculation is as follows—she is not eighteen, you are sixty-two—there goes five thousand pounds—then, Sir, you at least think her not ugly—she has many accomplishments, speaks Italian, French, plays upon the guittar, and as I fear you play upon no instrument whatever, I think you will be happy to take her at my terms, for here finishes the account of the ten thousand pounds.”

A letter came, too, from Mrs. Meadows, who had been an intimate friend of the family at Toulouse. It was a “kind epistle” to enquire after Yorick’s health and to inform him of her whereabouts since coming back to England. In apology for delaying his answer, Sterne told her that so great a misfortune had recently befallen him as to keep all concerns of friendship at a distance: “You must know, that by carelessness of my curate, or his wife, or his maid, or some one within his gates, the parsonage-house at Sutton was burnt to the ground, with the furniture that belonged to me, and a pretty good collection of books; the loss three hundred and fifty pounds—The poor man with his wife took the wings of the next morning, and fled away—this has given me real vexation, for so much was my pity and esteem for him, that as soon as I heard of this disaster, I sent to desire he would come and take up his abode with me till another habitation was ready to receive him—but he was gone—and, as I

am told, through fear of my persecution.—Heavens! how little did he know of me to suppose I was among the number of those wretches that heap misfortune upon misfortune—and when the load is almost insupportable, still to add to the weight! God, who reads my heart, knows it to be true—that I wish rather to share, than to encrease the burthen of the miserable—to dry up, instead of adding a single drop to the stream of sorrow.—As for the dirty trash of this world, I regard it not—the loss of it does not cost me a sigh, for after all, I may say with the Spanish Captain, that I am as good a gentleman as the king, only not quite so rich.”

It is interesting to observe here how Sterne’s pity and humour, pen once in hand, helped him over the hardest rubs of fortune. The frightened curate who ran away was the Rev. Marmaduke Collier, who had been in charge of Sutton since 1760. He was evidently soon induced to come out of hiding, for the baptisms, as recorded in the parish registry, appear in his hand throughout 1765. But he was replaced the next year by Launcelot Colley, who, after taking the parish duties for some months, was duly licensed to the cure on October 20, 1766. The recommendation was made by Sterne at an annual salary of £38.*

But to return to the letter to Mrs. Meadows. In recompense of her favour, Sterne invited her to Coxwold, and offered, if she were going abroad again, to escort her on the way. “Shall I expect you here”, ran the alluring invitation, “this summer?—I much wish that you may make it convenient to gratify me in a visit for a few weeks—I will give you a roast fowl for your dinner, and a clean table-cloth every day—and tell you a story by way of desert—in the heat of the day we will sit in the shade—and in the evening the fairest of all the milk-maids who pass by my gate, shall weave a garland for you.—If I should not be so fortunate, contrive to meet me [in London] the beginning of October—I shall stay a fortnight after, and then seek a kindlier climate.—This plaguy cough of mine seems to gain ground, and will bring me to my grave in spite of me—but while I have strength to run away from it I will—

* *Institutions of the Diocese of York.*

I have been wrestling with it for these twenty years past—and what with laughter and good spirits, have prevented its giving me a fall—but my antagonist presses closer than ever upon me—and I have nothing left on my side but another journey abroad—A-propos—are you for a scheme of that sort? if not, perhaps you will accompany me as far as Dover, that we may laugh together on the beach, to put Neptune in a good humour before I embark—God bless you, my dear Madam,—and believe me ever your's."

As the time for Sterne's departure on his foreign tour was approaching, the recurrent trouble with his lungs took him frequently to York for change, and perhaps to consult Dr. Dealtry. "I am going to York", he again wrote to Woodhouse late in the summer, "not to walk by the side of the muddy Ouse, but to recruit myself of the most violent spitting of blood that ever mortal man experienced; because I had rather (in case 'tis ordained so) die there, than in a post-chaise on the road." Among his friends in the city whom envy still spared him, was Marmaduke Fothergill, to whom he used to go for advice in the Sutton period. One day Fothergill told him of a droll encounter with an apothecary in Coney Street; and Sterne, suppressing names, retold the story for the benefit of Mr. Woodhouse: "A sensible friend of mine, with whom, not long ago, I spent some hours in conversation, met an apothecary (an acquaintance of ours)—the latter asked him how he did? Why, ill, very ill—I have been with Sterne, who has given me such a dose of *Attic salt* that I am in a fever—Attic salt, Sir, Attic salt! I have Glauber salt—I have Epsom salt in my shop, &c.—Oh! I suppose 'tis some French salt—I wonder you would trust his report of the medicine, he cares not what he takes himself."

As usual, Sterne was in for the August races, expecting to meet by appointment Lord Effingham, and Colonel John Blaquièrè, afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland, both of whom were most congenial companions. With them doubtless he drove out to the race-course, where occurred an incident which connects him agreeably with Elizabeth Graeme, a romantic young woman from the colonies. Miss Graeme

was a daughter of Thomas Graeme, physician and collector of customs at Philadelphia, and a granddaughter on her mother's side of Sir William Keith, a former governor of Pennsylvania. At the outbreak of the Revolution, she married a young Scotsman of Philadelphia named Ferguson, who accepted a commission in the British Army. It was she who bore Duché's famous letter to General Washington, urging that he persuade congress to rescind "the hasty and ill-advised" Declaration of Independence, and that, failing in the effort, he negotiate directly for his country at the head of the army. Back in 1765, when she went to England for her health, Miss Graeme was a clever young woman, twenty-five years old, fond of moralising in verse and of entering into Platonic friendships. She figures as the "Laura fair" in the verses of Nathaniel Evans, the colonial poet. In her leisure, she translated *Télémaque* into English heroic verse, and transcribed, it is said, the entire Bible, that it might be impressed upon her memory. Of her visit abroad, she felt most honoured by her gracious reception at Court and by an introduction to Laurence Sterne, which came about by chance. With a party of friends she attended the York races, where she took, it happened, a seat upon the same stage with Sterne. "While bets were making", says the narrative, "upon different horses, she selected a small horse that was in the rear of the courses as the subject of a trifling wager. Upon being asked the reason for doing so, she said, 'the race was not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong'. Mr. Sterne, who stood near her, was struck with this reply, and turning hastily toward her, begged for the honour of an acquaintance. They soon became sociable, and a good deal of pleasant conversation took place between them, to the great entertainment of the surrounding company.'"*

All summer Sterne was busy, so far as he was able to work at all, with his sermons. He kept his face, as he phrased it, turned towards Jerusalem. During the revision he must have written many letters asking for subscriptions and acknowledging favours; of which two to Foley have long

* M. Katherine Jackson, *Outlines of the Literary History of Pennsylvania*, 96-97 (Lancaster, Pa., 1906).

been known; and two others have come to light. One was to Lord Effingham to thank him, “as well as the *amiable comtesse votre chère mère*, for the honour of her name”; while the other, never yet published, was addressed to Thomas Hesselridge, Esq., of London, a gentleman in the service of Sir William Maynard, the fourth Baronet. It ran:—

“My dear dear Sir

“York, July 5.

“I made a thousand enquiries after you all this last winter and was told I should see you some part of it, in town—pray how do you do? and how do you go on, in this silly world? Have you seen my seven and eight graceless children?—but I am doing penance for them, in begetting a couple of more ecclesiastick ones—which are to stand penance (again) in their turns—in Sheets about the middle of September—they will appear in the Shape of the third and fourth volumes of Yorick. These you must know are to keep up a kind of balance, in my Shandaic character, and are push’d into the world for that reason by my friends with as splendid and numerous a List of Nobility &c—as ever pranced before a book, since subscriptions came into fashion—I should grieve not to have your name amongst those of my friends—and in so much good company as it has a right to be in—so tell me to set it down—and if you can—Lord Maynard’s—I have no design, my dear Hesselridge, upon your purse—’tis but a crown—but I have a design upon the credit [of] Lord Maynard’s name—and that of a person I love and esteem so much as I do you. If any occasions come in your way of adding three or four more to the list, your friendship for me, I know will do it.

“—N.B.—You must take their crowns—and keep them for me till fate does the courtesy to throw me in your way—This will not be, I fear, this year—for in September, I set out *Solus* for Italy—and shall winter at Rome and Naples. *L’hyvere à Londres ne vaut pas rien, pour les poumones—à cause d’humidité et la fume dont l’aire est chargée*—Let me hear how you do soon—and believe me ever your devoted and affectionate friend and wellwisher

“L. Sterne”

If all the letters sent forth from Shandy Hall were as gay and courteous as this one, we may easily understand their success with the world of fashion. Very graphic was the metaphor of the prancing steed, which was also worked into letters to Garrick and to Foley, and most likely into all the rest. The jest of saying that his sermons were to stand in sheets for *Tristram Shandy*, lay in the custom, still surviving at York in Sterne's day, of requiring one guilty of a grave sin to do penance by standing, with a sheet thrown over his head, on the steps of the cathedral. Mr. Hesselridge, almost needless to say, forwarded his subscription along with Sir William's. The splendid list, when completed, contained six hundred and ninety-three names, thus outnumbering the subscribers to the sermons of 1760 by a comfortable margin. Sterne's Yorkshire neighbours, even his old enemy, Philip Harland, were mostly there, as much as to say that they liked Yorick the preacher if not Yorick the author of *Tristram Shandy*; and there, too, were hosts of friends among the gentry and nobility with whom Sterne had associated in London and at watering-places. To count the stars in the list would be but to enumerate all the great families of the kingdom; while France contributed to the roll of honour the names of Diderot, d'Holbach, Cr  billon, and Voltaire.

Sterne was in London with his sermons the first week in October, somewhat later than he had at times expected. It was then arranged that he should set out at once on his journey, and leave their publication to Becket. This is the only instance in which Sterne did not superintend in person his books through the press. But in this case, his presence in London was hardly necessary. The lights were all pricked in, and the array of subscribers assured the sale of a large edition. On the financial side, Becket was quite willing to make advances, so that, including royalties and the bills brought up from York, Sterne was able to leave with him £600, upon which Panchaud and Foley might draw at sight, according as Sterne or his wife should make it expedient. Everything was thus settled for a long absence. For good reasons Becket delayed publication until the opening of the London season. The two volumes, numbered three and four,

as they appeared on Tuesday, January 21, 1766,* bore the old title for which Sterne had been censured: *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, which was followed by a table of contents, the old sub-title "Sermons by Laurence Sterne", etc., and "Subscribers Names". Sterne wrote a preface, but decided upon reflection that it would be better to let the sermons speak for themselves without apology. Along with their publication, a scribbler, who knew that no *Shandys* were intended by the author this year, favoured the public with a spurious sequel to my uncle Toby's courtship, which the reviewers thought admirable, if not genuine.

The new volumes contained only twelve sermons, instead of sixteen as planned in the summer. Among them were four that have been already described, to wit: the sermon at Coxwold on the coronation of George the Third, the charity sermon at the Foundling Hospital, the portrait of Hezekiah, and "The Abuses of Conscience", which had been published locally as a pamphlet and afterwards inserted in *Tristram Shandy*. To the last sermon, which closed the instalment, Sterne prefixed an advertisement asking pardon for its reappearance and for making the public "pay twice actually for the same thing".

"But it was judged", Sterne went on to say, "that some might better like it, and others better understand it just as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the sense and argument as it stands there offered to the world.

"It was an Assize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote by the same hand with the others in these four volumes, and as they are probably the last (except the sweepings of the Author's study after his death) that will be published, it was thought fit to add it to the collection,—where moreover it stands a chance of being read by many grave people with a much safer conscience.

"All the Editor wishes, is, That this may not after all, be one of those many abuses of it set forth in what he is now going to read."

* The sermons were entered on this day at Stationers' Hall by Becket for himself and De Hondt.

Though a few more good sermons remained in manuscript at Shandy Hall, the twelve that Sterne picked for publication were in his opinion the best. Of the eight about whose history we know little or nothing, most were doubtless old sermons, recast or stretched out for the closet, while two or three, like "The Prodigal Son", may have been prepared solely for the press. Again Sterne pleased and edified his public as much as six years before. The reviews took him up and ran through the volumes with long quotations; and for weeks an abridged sermon by Parson Yorick held the place of honour in the newspapers. No longer was any indecorum discovered in his assumed name of the king's jester; and except for the mild censure of a flight of fancy here and there as too free for the pulpit, everybody admired and spoke out in praise of the gentle, generous heart of Yorick.

Strictly orthodox in those rare instances where he touched upon points of doctrine, Sterne opened, as was his way, the scroll of Biblical characters and adorned them with fresh reflections. His readers were treated to a history of religions, in which were brought out the advantages of Christianity over Greek paganism; they were warned against all manner of pride—of birth, wealth, learning, and beauty—as unsocial vices, and exhorted to practise the humility of their Master. With the beautiful woman, proud of her loveliness, Sterne was less severe than with the rest. "And yet", concluded the moralist, "when the whole apology is read,—it will be found at last, that Beauty, like Truth, never is so glorious as when it goes the plainest.—Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of anything in this silly world, it should be of this honest alliance." The old harangues against the Church of Rome fell out of the new volumes, save for survivals that were allowed to stand, such as the sermon on conscience, and the definition of Popery, before quoted, as "a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking". In place of Roman Catholics, the Methodists came in for occasional censure on account of their spiritual pride—their professed illuminations and extraordinary experiences, which were described as merely me-

chanical disturbances of disordered understandings. As in his first volumes, Sterne sometimes went to Hall or to Tillotson for a start, but all was modernised to the delectation of his audience.

It was just this power to depict as modern types striking characters in Scripture, accompanied with the author's own personal remarks and opinions, that makes Sterne's sermons still readable. Take for instance his Shimei. It is related that David, after his son Absalom rose against him, fled from Jerusalem for safety. While he was passing by Mount Olivet, Shimei, of the house of Saul, came forth and cursed David; "and threw stones and cast dust at him". When Absalom was vanquished and David returned to Jerusalem in peace, Shimei was the first man to greet him. Sterne, well knowing that nobody cared anything about the blood-feud existing between the Benjamite and Israel, which explains in a clause the conduct of Shimei, easily modified the story so as to make out of David's railer a mean and abject time-server, such as he had seen with his own eyes.

"O Shimei!" the preacher exclaimed after relating his history, "would to heaven when thou wast slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee; and not one of thy resemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and replenished the earth; and if I prophecy rightly—ye will in the end *subdue* it.—There is not a character in the world which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei: * * * Oh! it infests the court—the camp—the cabinet—it infests the church——go where you will——in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay. * * * Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the smile will admit of.—Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—see—it hangs over Shimei's brow——Hast *thou been* spoken for to the king or the captain of the host without success?—look not into the court-kalendar—the vacancy is fill'd up in Shimei's face——Art thou in debt?—tho' not to

Shimei—no matter—the worst officer of the law shall not be more insolent.”

In a similar way Jacob became under Sterne’s hand the type of thousands who lament, when they see the end of life approaching, that their days have been few and evil. Most of the patriarch’s misfortunes were shown, with much ingenuity, to have resulted from mistaken views on the management of a family, from a “parental partiality or parental injustice”, as common in England as it ever was in the East. There were several hard places in Jacob’s career to slip over on this theory, but Sterne brushed away all obstacles. It is true, he admitted in a most difficult analogy, that no young man could be tricked now-a-days into marrying a Leah, instead of a Rachel, in just the way that Laban tricked Jacob. “But the moral of it is still good; and the abuse with the same complaint of Jacob’s upon it, will ever be repeated, so long as art and artifice are so busy as they are in these affairs. Listen, I pray you, to the stories of the disappointed in marriage:—collect all their complaints:—hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greatest part of them turn?—‘They were mistaken in the person.’—Some disguise either of body or mind is seen through in the first domestic scuffle;—some fair ornament—perhaps the very one which won the heart—the *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, falls off;—*It is not the Rachel for whom I have served*,—*Why hast thou then beguiled me?* * * * When the night is passed, ’twill ever be the same story,—*And it came to pass, behold it was Leah.*”

For the ills that befell Jacob at his marriage and before and after it, Sterne expressed pity; but it was the pity he felt for all “splenetic and morose souls” who do not take life as they find it. “If there is any evil”, he said, “in this world, ’tis sorrow and heaviness of heart.—The loss of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occasion sorrow;—take that out—the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.” And as for himself, though sickness and death pressed upon him, his prayer had ever been:

“Grant me, gracious God! to go chearfully on, the road

which thou hast marked out;—I wish it neither more wide or more smooth:—continue the light of this dim taper thou hast put into my hands:—I will kneel upon the ground seven times a day, to seek the best track I can with it —and having done that, I will trust myself and the issue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy,—and will sing songs of comfort as I go along.”

Very curious was Sterne’s analysis of the character of Felix, who, though convinced of Paul’s innocence, would nevertheless not release him because disappointed of a bribe. Sterne quickly hit upon the Roman governor’s ruling passion of avarice, but elaborated and explained it after an entirely new fashion. Paul’s well-known saying that the love of money is the root of all evil, was flatly contradicted. Shifting the point of view, Sterne held that “the love of money is only a subordinate and ministerial passion, exercised for the support of some other vices; and ’tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or lust, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the least mercy and discretion; in which cases, strictly speaking, it is not the root of other evils, —but other evils are the root of it”. And so it was in Felix’s case. To pass by ambition, Sterne expressed surprise that none of the commentators had fully weighed the influence upon the Roman procurator of his mistress Drusilla, who “had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up without ceremony to Felix, * * * a character, which might have figured very well even in our own times”. Drusilla, Sterne would suggest, feeling her guilt, instigated Felix against Paul, so that it was well the Apostle suffered no more, since “two such violent enemies as lust and avarice were combined against him”.

More curious still was the sermon on “The Levite and his Concubine”, which the *Monthly Review* thought wore “too gay an aspect” for the pulpit. The sermon was probably never preached; and yet it contained nothing that could have disturbed the eighteenth century. At the outset, Sterne was very careful to make clear that in the Jewish economics the concubine was essentially a wife; that concubinage was

practised by Solomon, who however rather abused his privileges under the law; and that, if the Levite needed any further justification for his one concubine, it should be remembered that there was no king in Israel at the time. So much, declared the preacher, might be said for the Levite, if one looked for explanations; but for himself he was content to rest the case with nature:

“For notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet still, *‘it is not good for man to be alone’*. * * * In the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship. * * * Let the torpid Monk seek heaven comfortless and alone—God speed him! For my own part, I fear, I should never so find the way: let me be wise and religious—but let me be MAN: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee—give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down; to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of nature! How sweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are these fruits!”

With good taste, Sterne stopped short of the horrible catastrophe as related in Scripture, and in Bishop Hall, who was followed in places very closely; and pieced out his discourse with a few remarks on “the rash censurers of the world”, who set up a “trade upon the broken stock of other people’s failings,—perhaps their misfortunes”. “Certainly there is a difference”, he told crabbed satirists finely with reference to his own art, “between *Bitterness* and *Saltiness*,—that is,—between the malignity and the festivity of wit,—the one is a mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes from the Father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man: or if it touches upon an indecorum, ’tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the absurdity, and let it pass.—He may smile at the shape of the obelisk raised to another’s fame,—but the malignant wit will level

it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it."

And finally we have Sterne where everybody should like to see him—in a sermon on the Prodigal Son, a theme which invited him to give loose rein to all the tender emotions in the train of pity and mercy, up to the climax where the preacher declared that the joy and riot of the kindly affections was but "another name for religion". Without restraint, Sterne let his fancy play with the parable, reviving, with all sorts of imaginary details, the remonstrance of the father against the rash enterprise of his son, the spendthrift's parting with his father and elder brother by the side of "camels and asses loaden with his substance", his varied life in many lands, until a mighty famine drove him back to his father's roof, and the fatted calf was killed, and the pavilion was lighted up for the dance and wild festivity. Of course, Sterne's graphic and pathetic pictures, flowing on in a well-ordered series, had little warrant in the brief narrative of St. Luke; but as literature the sermon was all the better for that. It was perhaps all the better, too, for his weakening, almost losing, the moral of the parable by the zest with which he related the prodigal's experiences at Ninevah and Babylon. The young man, his substance all wasted, has decided to return to his father and beg for forgiveness; and thereon says the preacher:

"Alas! How shall he tell his story? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he shall give in to his father, the sad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?—The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east,—the costs of Asiatick rarities,—and of Asiatick cooks to dress them—the expences of singing men and singing women,—the flute, the harp, the sackbut, and of all kinds of musick—the dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent! their slaves, how numerous!—their chariots, their horses, their palaces, their furniture, what immense sums they had devoured!—what expectations from strangers of condition! what exactions!—How shall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damascus by one of the best men in the world;—that he had lent a

part of his substance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been sold by a man of honour for twenty shekels of silver, to a worker in graven images;—that the images he had purchased had profited him nothing;—that they could not be transported across the wilderness, and had been burnt with fire at Shusan;—that the apes and peacocks, which he had sent for from Tharsis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:—that all had gone wrong since the day he forsook his father's house."

No one except Sterne could have imagined those romantic details of a spendthrift; or, had he done so, have ventured to put them into a sermon. But a greater surprise follows. Having brought the prodigal home and set the wine flowing, the man of the world proceeded to modernise the parable by offering "some reflections upon that fatal passion which led him,——and so many thousands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country*"——some observations, in short, upon the grand tour for which he himself was preparing. The desire for travelling on the Continent, the preacher held, was in no way bad, considered by itself. "Order it rightly, the advantages are worth the pursuit; the chief of which are—to learn the languages, the laws and customs, and understand the government and interest of other nations,—to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more easily for conversation and discourse;——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery mistakes; and by shewing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments."

But few or none, said Sterne, of the young Englishmen who swarm the capitals of Europe bring back any part of this cargo. If they go out alone, "without *carte*,—without compass"——they escape well if they return only as naked as when they left home. If you place your son in charge of a scholar to act as bear-leader, "the upshot will be generally

* * * that the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry, —and not the tutor to carry him”. You may choose for your son, not a scholar read in Greek and Latin, but a man “who knows the world, * * * who has been employed on such services, and thrice made the *tour of Europe, with success*,—that is, without breaking his own, or his pupil’s neck”. From such a guide, the young man “will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every stage from Calais to Rome; —he will be carried to the best inns,—instructed where there is the best wine, and sup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himself.—Look at our governor! I beseech you:—see, he is an inch taller as he relates the advantages.—And here endeth his pride—his knowledge, and his use”.

Perhaps a fond father imagines that the stripling will be taken up everywhere he goes by distinguished natives of the country to whom he may carry letters of recommendation. Him Sterne would disillusion by observing that “company which is really good, is very rare—and very shy”; and as for letters to eminent men, they will obtain a courteous first reception but nothing more. “Conversation”, it should be understood, “is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once. * * * There is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their visits.” Cut off from his intellectual superiors, “the disappointed youth seeks an easier society; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the Gospel.”

So ended, by a violent reversal to the parable, the strangest of all Yorick’s sermons, composed, very likely, not long before his departure for Italy.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TOUR OF ITALY

OCTOBER 1765—MAY 1766

WHEN the sermons came out, Sterne was at Rome, midway on the grand tour which has been immortalised in *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. Considered as an actual record of the expedition, the famous book has, however, for the biographer very great perplexities, at first sight almost desperate, inasmuch as Yorick combined with the observations of this year characters and incidents of his first sojourn in France, and further mingled with both sets anecdotes heard and read by the way and elsewhere, as if they had really fallen within his own personal experience. Two distinct tours and some fiction were thus completely fused in one beautiful narrative. We may nevertheless eliminate much of the fiction and most of the first tour; and then, with the aid of various letters, retell the story of Sterne's last travels on the Continent. If the narrative, thus cut down and pieced out, loses much of its literary charm, there will emerge in its place a new biographical interest. Monsieur Dessein, La Fleur, and many names disguised under initials and stars will turn out to be real persons whom Sterne met and associated with on the journey, though no one should insist too far upon a literal interpretation of the incidents which fancy at times wove about them.*

Perhaps we should be reminded at the outset that the Yorick who made the tour of Italy, was in all externals quite different from the Yorick whom we first saw as the rural parson cultivating his glebe and other lands. So careless

* In 1824 John Poole the dramatist went over the Sterne route from Calais to Paris, identifying Sterne's stopping-places and gathering up local traditions. See his two articles in the *London Magazine* for 1825. pp. 38-46 and 387-94.

and slovenly was he then in appearance as to attract the attention of boys when he came into York and shuffled through the streets. Referring to those days, he called himself "a lousy prebendary". Five years of London and Paris made out of him a Chesterfield. He grew scrupulous, though not extravagant, in dress; and no man of the age was more at ease in society—more courteous and more urbane. On his first coming to London, Reynolds painted him most fittingly in the clerical gown which he wore as Vicar of Sutton. In Carmontelle and Gainsborough he appeared in the costume of an aristocrat. And yet Yorick, possessing good taste, never assumed the fashionable colours of the period, but chose instead the equally fashionable complete black, with conspicuous white lace ruffles, neat and dignified, becoming a man of his age and profession as well as a man of the world. So, remembering what he once was, it is rather amusing to find Sterne writing to Foley from London on the seventh of October to request him to order from Madame Requière, against his reaching Paris in seven days, "*une peruque à bourse, au mieux—c'est-à-dire—une la plus extraordinaire—la plus jolie—la plus gentille*", for you know, he concluded, "*j'ai l'honneur d'être grand critique—et bien difficile encore dans les affaires de perukes*".

Sure of his Parisian wig, Sterne next packed "half a dozen shirts and a black pair of silk breeches" in his portmanteau, and took a place in the Dover stage, if his plans did not go wrong, on the morning of October 9, 1765. The following day he embarked on the nine-o'clock packet for Calais, and five or six hours later he was refreshing himself at his inn on fricasseed chicken and burgundy. The inn where he rested after the voyage was not the old Lyon d'Argent—or the Silver Lion, as the English called it—where his wife and daughter lodged a night, and whose master—Monsieur Grand-sire—Sterne set down, after one experience with him, as "a Turk in grain"; it was the Hôtel d'Angleterre, recently established in "the principal street" of Calais by Monsieur Dessein. The host, it is said, had been a favourite waiter with the English passing through Calais, most likely at the Silver Lion, and assumed his peculiar name from a compli-

ment of one of them, who remarked: "*Il a du dessein, ce gaillard là.*" This shrewd *garçon*, taking advantage of his master's unpopularity, opened a house of his own, to which most tourists, furious at Monsieur Grandsire's overcharges,* hastened to transfer their patronage. "No hotel in France", remarked Philip Thicknesse, the eccentric traveller, who spent a day there in 1767, "is equal to that from which I now write. Monsieur Dessein knows the *goût* of both nations and blends them with propriety; and he has the advantage of a palace as it were, to do it in."† Monsieur Dessein was rather odd in appearance—though Sterne scarcely noticed it,—as he had but one eye and wore a long wig with curls and tail, at a time when shorter wigs were the fashion. He was most civil and affable in bearing, though sharp in his charges and at a bargain. It was his custom to greet an innocent arrival from Dover with a bow and a side-look resembling the squint of a cock as he eyes a barley-corn, and then to ask Monsieur whether he had any English gold to exchange for French coin. These transactions were very profitable, for Monsieur Dessein knew how to make ten sous on every guinea.‡ But if he cheated his guests, it was done so pleasantly that they felt no resentment.

Burned out in 1770, Dessein built anew, adding a theatre, and fitted up a room in honour of his famous guest, hanging over the mantel a mezzotint of Reynolds's *Monsieur Sterne d'Yorick*, and painting on the outside of the door in large characters STERNE'S CHAMBER. There numberless Englishmen down to Thackeray slept, in the fancy that they were lying in the very place where Sterne once stretched his lean shanks. At the new inn Foote laid the scene of his *Trip to Calais*, containing a caricature of the master under the name of Monsieur Tromfort. There, too, stayed Frederic Reynolds, another dramatist, for a day or two in 1782, while the merry host was still alive; and asking him whether he remem-

* J. Wilkes to Humphrey Cotes, Dec. 12, 1764: *Correspondence of Wilkes*, edited by J. Almon, II, 102-3 (London, 1805).

† Letter dated August 10, 1767: Thicknesse, *Useful Hints to those who make the Tour of France*, 278-81 (London, 1768).

‡ Thicknesse, *A Year's Journey through France and Spain*, I, 9-30 (London, 1778).

bered Monsieur Sterne, received the interesting reply: “ ‘Your countryman, Monsieur Sterne, von great, von vary great man, and he carry me vid him to posterity. He gain moche money by his Journey of Sentiment—mais moi—I—make more through de means of dat, then he, by all his ouvrages reunies—Ha, ha!’ Then, as if in imitation of Sterne, he laid his forefinger on my breast, and said in a voice lowered almost to a whisper, ‘*Qu’en pensez vous?*’ ”* To say truth, the mere mention of Monsieur Dessein in the *Sentimental Journey* made him “one of the richest men in Calais”.

Sterne halted at Dessein’s for no more than two or three hours, but time enough to set going a series of sweet and pleasurable emotions in himself and others, which was his premeditated aim in this tour. No churches, no monuments, no art galleries were to be visited, or even looked at if it could be helped; at least, they were nowhere to intrude upon a pleasant commerce with men and women, with strangers as well as with old friends whom he might chance to meet on the way to Italy. “I conceive”, he said in explaining the difference between his and all other journeys, “every fair being as a temple, and would rather enter in, and see the original drawings, and loose sketches hung up in it, than the transfiguration of Raphael itself.” “ ‘Tis a quiet journey”, he concluded exquisitely, “of the heart in pursuit of NATURE, and those affections which arise out of her, which make us love each other—and the world, better than we do.”

Sterne had not long to wait for his first emotional experience. Close by Dessein’s was a convent of Franciscan friars—monks Sterne called them—one of whom was accustomed to attend all visitors at the inn and to do the duties of the *quête* for his order. Mrs. Thrale saw him in 1775, while at Calais with her husband and Dr. Johnson; and subsequently, when she had become Mrs. Piozzi, introduced him into her *Journey through France* as Father Felix, who, after a career in the army, retired in old age to the convent for

* *Life and Times of Frederic Reynolds, written by himself*, I, 179-81 (London, 1826).

quiet and study. On hearing the story of his varied life, Dr. Johnson declared "that so complete a character could scarcely be found in romance". Sterne had drunk the last of his burgundy in a health to the King of France, and his arteries were all beating cheerily together under its influence, when Father Felix, or his earlier counterpart, entered and asked an alms for his convent. "It was one of those heads", Sterne saw at a glance, "which Guido has often painted—mild, pale—penetrating, free from all commonplace ideas of fat contented ignorance looking downwards upon the earth—it look'd forwards; but look'd, as if it look'd at something beyond this world." Advancing into the room three paces, the thin and aged friar "stood still; and laying his left hand upon his breast (a slender white staff with which he journey'd being in his right)—when I got close up to him, he introduced himself with the little story of the wants of his convent, and the poverty of his order—and did it with so simple a grace—and such an air of deprecation was there in the whole cast of his look and figure—I was bewitch'd not to have been struck with it". Notwithstanding the suppliant's persuasive words and attitude, Sterne denied the alms for the effect of the denial upon his own and the friar's heart, as seen or felt in the blood coursing through their cheeks; and then for the same reason he begged the friar's pardon, and exchanged snuff-boxes with him, while watching "the stream of good feeling" gush from the mendicant's eyes. Never before had Sterne known, he averred, how sweet was a gentle contention ending in mutual good will.

With Monsieur Dessein, Sterne then strolled out to his *remise*, or magazine of chaises, to purchase one for the tour of Italy. As they walked along, each bent upon overreaching the other in the bargain, Sterne eyed his host askance, thinking him one moment a Jew and then a Turk; but while he was silently "wishing him to the devil", he encountered a beautiful woman, Madam de L * * *, who had just come in from Brussels on her way to Paris; and at once all the base and ungentle passions gave place to pity for the distress which he read in her look and bearing. "It was a face of about six and twenty—of a clear transparent brown, simply set off without

rouge or powder—it was not critically handsome, but there was that in it, which, in the frame of mind I was in, attached me much more to it—it was interesting; I fancied it wore the characters of a widow'd look, and in that state of its declension, which had passed the two first paroxysms of sorrow, and was quietly beginning to reconcile itself to its loss—but a thousand other distresses might have traced the same lines." The fresh train of emotions, as Sterne took the hand of the unhappy Fleming by the door of the *remise* or sat with her alone in one of Monsieur Dessein's chaises, was broken off by the arrival of the count, her brother. What name was borne by the sentimental stranger who crossed Sterne's path at Calais, matters little, but the curious filled out the stars into the Marquise de Lamberti. In bidding her adieu, Yorick was suffered to kiss her gloved hand twice; whereupon his heart so melted within him that he no longer recked of being cheated by Monsieur Dessein. With no word of protest, he paid the Turk twelve guineas for an old chaise, and ordered post-horses directly.

That evening Sterne probably went on to Boulogne; and thence to Montreuil in the rain, where he lay the next night at the old Hôtel de la Cour de France, kept by Monsieur Varennes. At this inn Sterne was again attended by Janatone, *la belle fille de chambre*, whom he had seen knitting her stocking on his first journey. In the interval she had grown more coquettish under the flatteries of English travellers, Sterne thought, to her harm. Was it Janatone, one wonders, or her successor, whom Mrs. Piozzi found the only interesting object at Montreuil? The girl, still handsome, complained to Mrs. Piozzi of the behaviour of the lady's avant-courier. "*Il parle sur le haut ton, mademoiselle*", apologised Mrs. Piozzi, "*mais il a le cœur bon.*" "*Ouidà*", retorted the smart *fille de chambre*, "*mais c'est le ton qui fait le chanson.*"*

On the road to Montreuil, Sterne came near losing his portmanteau, which fell off twice into the mud and took him

* Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (London, 1779). For Calais and Montreuil, see I, 1-9.

out in the rain to tie it on. As a precaution against further mishaps, Monsieur Varennes advised him to take a valet, who would protect him against careless postillions, as well as shave him, dress his wig, and wait upon him at table. If the English gentleman wished such a servant, said the host, no one could suit him better than La Fleur, who was beloved by everybody in Montreuil. At that moment La Fleur, who had been standing at the door breathless with expectation, stepped into the room; and Sterne put him through an examination in the valet's art. La Fleur had been, he told his prospective master, a drummer-boy in the army; but finding that "the honour of beating a drum was likely to be its own reward, as it open'd no further track of glory", he retired "*à ses terres*"; that is, with the varnish off, he had deserted and fled to Montreuil in disguise, where he was living as best he could, by performing small services for guests at the Hôtel de France. "He could make spatterdashes", it was brought out in the enquiry, "and play a little upon the fiddle"; while the host put in a word to say that the lad was trustworthy and even-tempered,—if he had a fault, it was that he was always in love with one maiden or another. No further recommendation was necessary to the sentimental traveller, who immediately engaged La Fleur for the whole tour of Italy. "He was", said Sterne in remembrance, "a faithful, affectionate, simple soul as ever trudged after the heels of a philosopher; and notwithstanding his talents of drum-beating and spatterdash-making, which, though very good in themselves, happened to be of no great service to me, yet was I hourly recompensed by the festivity of his temper—it supplied all defects—I had a constant resource in his looks, in all difficulties and distresses of my own—I was going to have added, of his too; but La Fleur was out of the reach of every thing; for whether it was hunger or thirst, or cold or nakedness, or watchings, or whatever stripes of ill luck La Fleur met with in our journeyings, there was no index in his physiognomy to point them out by—he was eternally the same."

That evening, as Sterne ate his supper, with his own valet behind his chair, he felt as happy as a monarch in his good

fortune. The next morning La Fleur was placed in command of all details of the journey. He ordered his master's chaise, horses, and postillion to the door; and standing in his great jack-boots before the inn, took a tender leave of half a dozen girls, for all of whom he promised to bring pardons from Rome. Sterne passed out to his chaise through a long line of urbane beggars, among whom he distributed sous in return for their blessings; the postillion cracked his whip; La Fleur mounted a bidet and shot forward as avant-courier. Nothing happened until they were approaching Nampont, where La Fleur's horse shied at a dead ass in the road, cast his rider, and scampered back home. Whereupon Sterne took his valet into the chaise along with him, and they jogged on to Amiens for the night. There they overtook Madame de L * * * and her brother, who put up, however, at another inn. It may be that the lady, as says the *Sentimental Journey*, sent over to Sterne a letter of introduction to her friend Madame de R * * * of Paris; and that he, perplexed in his French, repaid the courtesy by adapting one of La Fleur's old love letters to a suitable reply. In two days more, over which hangs silence, Sterne was again in Paris.

If the *Sentimental Journey* points true, Sterne took lodgings at the Hôtel de Modène, number 14 Rue Jacob,* then a pretty street, in the Faubourg St. Germain, with residences, as the imagination may still restore them, set back from the street and built around courts. On the second floor was his room, furnished with bureau and writing-table, and having bed and windows bright with crimson curtains. This dainty apartment Sterne chose for a scene with Madame de R * * * 's "fair *fille de chambre*", who came with an enquiry from her mistress; and for another scene with the grisette who sold him "a pair of ruffles" from her box of laces. It was there, too, that La Fleur appeared on a Sunday morning, dressed, to the surprise of his master, in a scarlet livery, which he had purchased at a second-hand shop in the Rue de la Vieille Friperie for four louis d'or, the first instalment of his wages; and there Sterne sat the rest of the day translating a story for the *Sentimental Journey* out of the

* *Notes and Queries*, seventh series, IX, 366.

crabbed French of Rabelais's time. In a long passage below, opening upon the court-yard, hung the cage of an imprisoned starling, taught to cry with the plaintive voice of a child: "I can't get out—I can't get out." Hearing the sad notes one day as he was going down stairs, Sterne returned directly to his room, he says, and leaning his head over the little table, imagined and wrote out the sketch of the "pale and feverish" captive wasting away in a dungeon of the Bastille.

The day after his arrival, if we may still go on with the *Sentimental Journey*, Sterne procured his wig and dressed himself to call upon Madam de R * * *, to whom he bore a letter from the brown lady that he had exchanged tender courtesies with at Calais. It was but a short walk to her *hôtel* round the corner in the handsome Rue des Saints Pères. But the day was so far advanced before the barber and La Fleur had done with him, that he changed his mind and decided to visit the Comédie Italienne, popularly called the Opéra Comique, across the river in the Rue Mauconseil. The old quarter of the city where stood his hotel, was then, as it is now, a network of streets so very perplexing that it was necessary for him to enquire his way. Strolling along the Rue Jacob and its continuation in the Rue du Colombier, "in search of a face not likely to be disordered by such an interruption", he saw, as he was about to pass the door of a glove-shop, a grisette of uncommon beauty, sitting in the rear and making a pair of ruffles. He stepped in and purchased two pairs of gloves. During the transaction, his fingers fell upon the grisette's wrist, that he might feel the pulse of one of the fairest and best-tempered beings that he had ever met with in his sentimental wanderings.

"I had counted twenty pulsations", as Sterne relates the adventure, "and was going on fast towards the fortieth, when her husband coming unexpected from a back parlour into the shop, put me a little out of my reckoning.—'Twas nobody but her husband, she said—so I began a fresh score—Monsieur is so good, quoth she, as he pass'd by us, as to give himself the trouble of feeling my pulse—The husband took off his hat, and making me a bow, said, I did him too much

honour—and having said that, he put on his hat and walk'd out."

Poor Yorick was utterly overcome by the grisette's quick black eyes, which shot through long and silken eyelashes into his very heart and reins. He nevertheless went on, under the guidance of a lad from the glove-shop, to the Pont-Neuf, whence the route was clear to the Rue Mauconseil. At the play, his heart was disturbed by the selfishness of a "tall corpulent German near seven feet high", standing in the parterre, who persisted in keeping in front of a dwarf, and so shutting off for the little fellow all view of the stage. Sterne's plaudits were not for the actors, but for a sentinel who thrust the German back with his musket and placed the dwarf before him. "This is noble", exclaimed Sterne to a French officer in the same box with him, and clapped his hands together. After the play, he stopped a few minutes in the "long dark passage issuing out from the Opéra Comique into a narrow street", to watch the behaviour of two tall and lean ladies, who, while waiting for their carriage, were wheedled out of two twelve-sous pieces by a beggar proficient in the art of that flattery which rules the world. On the way back to his hotel, he lost his way again, as well he might, after crossing the Pont-Neuf and reaching the Quai de Conti; but by chance he met Madame R * * * 's *fille de chambre*, who walked along with him to the Rue de Guénégaud, and bidding him adieu there, directed him to the Hôtel de Modène, where La Fleur was waiting to put his master to bed.

These incidents, related baldly without the author's embellishments, seem very trivial indeed; but they show Sterne clearly in lights which have hitherto only partially shone upon him. Human nature among all classes intensely interested him. He was as eager to learn what was going on in the heart and head of a grisette who kept her husband's shop, or of a dwarf in distress at the theatre, or tumbling into a gutter, as he was to divine the brilliant men and women who frequented the salons. If we could know, we should probably find that the evening at the Opéra Comique was but typical of many walks alone through the streets of

Paris in quest of fresh emotions. But except in so far as we have cautiously employed it, the *Sentimental Journey* can not be trusted as a guide for Sterne in Paris at this time. French gentlemen with whom he had previously associated and whom he brings upon the scene in his narrative, were mostly away on their estates in the country. The Court was still at Fontainebleau; and Hume, as *chargé d'affaires*, was there too. With the Court were likely also the Duc de Choiseul and the Comte de Bissy, whom Sterne represents himself as going out to see at Versailles. All this part of the *Sentimental Journey* was based upon Sterne's first reception in Paris three years before; while the hint of an excursion to Rennes to witness the Marquis d'E * * * * reclaim his sword before the assembled states of Brittany, is pure fiction. It was a touching story which Sterne heard or read of somewhere, and related because it fitted into his emotional scheme. Paris was this year only his stopping-place for not above ten days on the route to Italy. Arrangements had to be made with his bankers for remittances and for sending on his letters from home. In these transactions Foley, who was likely out of town, gave place to Panchaud, the other member of the firm, for whom and his unmarried sister Sterne expressed great esteem. By good luck Diderot and Baron d'Holbach were close by at Grandval, if not in the city; and they received Sterne into the old intimacy.

Amid the dearth of fashionable society, Sterne found amusement not only in sentimental pilgrimages among the tradespeople, but in the English colony which was beginning to gather for the winter. Wilkes, who had varied his exile by a visit to Italy, had just returned to Paris and settled near Sterne at the Hôtel de Saxe in the Rue du Colombier. With him or not far away was Foote the comedian, who was in Paris for rest and recreation. The trio fell in with another set of Englishmen, who hovered around John Craufurd of Errol, "one of the gayest young gentlemen", wrote a cadet in his service, "and the greatest gambler that ever belonged to Scotland". The remark ought not to be taken as in the least derogatory to Mr. Craufurd's character, as the world went in those days; for he was one of the best known young

men in London and Parisian society. The season over at home, it was Craufurd's custom to make a circular tour abroad which should include Paris, where the blind and brilliant Madame du Deffand took him under her protection. He put up usually at the expensive Hôtel de Parc Royal, and had his dinners served from the still more expensive Hôtel de Bourbon. As befitted a young spark of wealth and leisure, he drove about Paris in a French chariot, with a French coachman and a French footman. In his company were the young Earl of Upper Ossory, a man of finer grain, and Lord William Gordon, second son of the third Duke of Gordon. Horace Walpole was also in Paris, living, say his letters, most of the time—when not with Madame du Deffand, or nursing the gout in his lodgings—with Craufurd and Lord Ossory, the latter of whom he classed among “the most amiable” men he had ever known—“modest, manly, very sensible, and well bred”.

Sterne, it would appear, knew Craufurd beforehand, for he wrote of him as “my friend”; and he now made the acquaintance of the rest in the group. Walpole, who had hitherto kept out of Sterne's way, was at length trapped into his company, either at Baron d'Holbach's or Craufurd's table, whence good breeding would not let him escape. Wilkes and Foote were present on the occasion. “You will think it odd”, Walpole wrote to Thomas Brand, on October 19, 1765, “that I should want to laugh, when Wilkes, Sterne, and Foote are here; but the first does not make me laugh, the second never could, and for the third, I choose to pay five shillings when I have a mind he should divert me.”

Either then or at another time Craufurd related to the company the following strange adventure, which Sterne reworked for “The Case of Delicacy” at the close of the *Sentimental Journey*:

On the way between Verviers and Aix-la-Chapelle, the young man once stopped at a crowded inn and engaged the only room left for the night. It was a large room with a closet containing another but smaller bed. Half an hour later, a Flemish lady, called Madame Blond in the story, arrived with her maid in a chaise, and asked for a night's lodging,

with some perturbation of spirit when she saw that the inn was full. The landlady could not possibly accommodate her; but Madame Blond persisted in having a bed, saying that she would make any shift for one night. So it was finally arranged that she might take the closet of the English gentleman's apartment, if he would agree to it. Thereupon Madame Blond, sending her compliments in advance, came up stairs, and asked Mr. Craufurd, "with all the politeness in the world", if she might sit with him through the evening. With equal civility he made her welcome, and invited her to a game of cards while supper was preparing. When the evening had worn on to an end, Mr. Craufurd politely said: "If you like, Madame Blond, you may have the bed, as it will hold yourself and maid, and I will sleep in the closet." "By no means", replied the Flemish lady; "I am extremely obliged to you for the privilege of the little bed." "Come, madame", then rejoined Mr. Craufurd, "we will play at cards for the large bed." They accordingly played for it, and the lady lost. Madame Blond bade the English gentleman good night, retired to her closet, and, as she did so, gave strict orders to her maid to bolt the door, though why was not quite clear to Mr. Craufurd, since the bolt was on the outside in his own room. The next morning Madame Blond went on to Spa, and Mr. Craufurd to Aix-la-Chapelle.*

Near the twenty-fourth of October, Sterne left Paris, taking La Fleur in his smart livery along with him, and pursued his way southwards to Lyons—a week's journey by the long route which he chose through "the Bourbonnais, the sweetest part of France". It was "the hey-day of the vintage, when Nature is pouring her abundance into every one's lap, and every eye is lifted up—a journey through each step of which Music beats time to *Labour*, and all her children are rejoicing as they carry in their clusters". Amid "the joyous riot" of his affections, which flew out and kindled at every new scene, he was sobered, according to the *Sentimental Journey*, by the sight of a distracted peasant girl sitting by

* John Macdonald, a cadet of the family of Keppoch, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa* (London, 1790). The anecdote, preceded by an account of Craufurd, is given on pages 138-40.

the roadside as his chaise drew near Moulins, the ancient seat of the Bourbons. Doubtless the account of the poor girl can not be accepted precisely as Sterne rendered it; but it is quite certain that behind the adventure lay some emotional hint. Sterne related the story twice over, and a version subsequently got into current anecdotes, with the claim that it was derived from La Fleur. "When we came up to her", says the valet's version, "she was grovelling in the Road like an infant, and throwing the Dust upon her head—and yet few were more lovely! Upon Sterne's accosting her with tenderness, and raising her in his arms, she collected herself and resumed some composure—told him her tale of misery and wept upon his breast—my master sobbed aloud. I saw her gently disengage herself from his arms, and she sung him the service to the Virgin; my poor master covered his face with his hands, and walked by her side to the Cottage where she lived."

If the narrative purporting to come from La Fleur can not be proved authentic, it is at least a very good guess at what really occurred by the dusty roadside. Sterne himself, be it noted, really said no more than was attributed to his valet, nor quite so much as that, when he first told the story for the ninth volume of *Shandy*, though incident and emotion were graded by the most perfect art to a humorous conclusion:

"——They were the sweetest notes I ever heard; and I instantly let down the fore-glass to hear them more distinctly——'Tis *Maria*; said the postillion, observing I was listening——Poor *Maria*, continued he, (leaning his body on one side to let me see her, for he was in a line betwixt us), is sitting upon a bank playing her vespers upon her pipe, with her little goat beside her. * * * It is but three years ago, that the sun did not shine upon so fair, so quick-witted and amiable a maid; and better fate did *Maria* deserve, than to have her Banns forbid, by the intrigues of the curate of the parish who published them.—He was going on, when *Maria*, who had made a short pause, put the pipe to her mouth, and began the air again—they were the same notes;——yet were ten times sweeter. It is the evening service to the Virgin, said the young man—but who has taught her

to play it—or how she came by her pipe, no one knows.

“We had got up by this time almost to the bank where *Maria* was sitting; she was in a thin white jacket, with her hair, all but two tresses, drawn up into a silken net, with a few olive leaves twisted a little fantastically on one side—she was beautiful; and if ever I felt the full force of an honest heartache, it was the moment I saw her—God help her! poor damsel! above a hundred masses, said the postillion, have been said in the several parish churches and convents around, for her,—but without effect. * * * As the postillion spoke this, *MARIA* made a cadence so melancholy, so tender and querulous, that I sprung out of the chaise to help her, and found myself sitting betwixt her and her goat before I relapsed from my enthusiasm.—*MARIA* look’d wistfully for some time at me, and then at her goat—and then at me—and then at her goat again, and so on, alternately—Well, *Maria*, said I softly—What resemblance do you find?”

A night at “an excellent inn”, and Sterne went on into the mountains of Lyonnais. As he was ascending Mount Tarare in the evening, the thill-horse lost two shoes, making it necessary, since the postillion had no nails, to stop at a little farm-house for repairs. On entering the house, Sterne found a grey-haired peasant and his wife, with grown-up sons and daughters and a numerous progeny out of them, “all sitting down together to their lentil-soup; a large wheaten loaf was in the middle of the table; and a flaggon of wine at each end of it, promised joy through the stages of the repast”. The peasant, rising up and stepping towards the stranger, cordially invited him to join in the evening meal. “I sat down at once”, says Sterne, who was as much at home with a French peasant as with Baron d’Holbach, “like a son of the family; and to invest myself in the character as speedily as I could, I instantly borrowed the old man’s knife, and taking up the loaf, cut myself a hearty luncheon.” When supper was over, the sons and daughters of labour all ran out on a little esplanade in front of the house; and the peasant and his wife followed with their guest, who sat down between them “upon a sofa of turf by the door”. The old

man touched his *vielle*, and all the children and grandchildren fell into the evening dance.

After watching the scene through a few dances, Sterne pushed on to Tarare, a little town among the mountains, where he engaged a *voiturin* with a couple of mules to conduct him in his chaise down the descent to Lyons and on through Savoy. At Lyons, he spent a joyous week, "dining and supping every day at the commandant's", in company with ten or twelve other Englishmen who were accorded similar hospitality. Of them was a certain "Lord F. W.", and Horne Tooke, the pugnacious parson who was about to turn political agitator in favour of Wilkes. Mr. Horne, as he was then called, was a young man under thirty who had not yet discovered his true vocation. Some years before, he had "suffered", he told Wilkes, "the infectious hand of a bishop to be waved over" him, but he "was not ordained a hypocrite", and would go his own way. On coming over to France as bear-leader to the son of a Mr. Taylor of Brentford, he discarded his clerical dress, and flaunted through Paris in scarlet and silver, alternating with blue and silver. There were indeed no less than five variegated suits in his wardrobe. After visiting Wilkes and offering him his services, he started on the grand tour a day or two before Sterne arrived in Paris. Although Sterne found him an agreeable companion enough at Lyons, he was clearly bored by his eulogies of the champion of British liberty. "Is there any cause of coldness", Horne enquired in a letter to Wilkes, "between you and Sterne? He speaks very handsomely of you, when it is absolutely necessary to speak at all; but not with that *warmth and enthusiasm*, that I expect from every one that knows you."* When the two men parted, Horne for Montpellier and Sterne for Italy, it was agreed that they should meet at Siena in the summer.

Sterne's route lay through the mountain passes of Savoy over Mont Cenis to Turin. A day's journey brought him to Pont-de-Beauvoisin, a small town almost surrounded by two branches of the Guiers-Vif, which takes its rise in the

* Alexander Stephens, *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke*, II, 76-7 (London, 1813).

Alps. At this place, Sterne was held prisoner for two or three days by the terrible autumn rains, which poured down upon him and his fellow travellers, as if heaven and earth were coming together. The petty rivulets swelled with the rains and the melting snow until they became impassable; and Sterne, hemmed in on all sides, could neither return to Lyons nor advance into the mountains. Setting forward at length on the eighth of November, with voiturin and mules, he was a full week in traversing Savoy, along precipices, up and down narrow valleys by the side of mountain torrents and cataracts, "which roll down great stones" from the summits. One evening, as he was hastening through a pouring rain from St. Michel to Modane, his mules came to a sudden halt before a huge fragment of rock which had fallen across the road. All day long the peasants had been trying to remove it; and for two hours more they laboured on into the "wet and tempestuous night", while Sterne sat in his chaise, watching them through the window amid the flare of torches. When a narrow passage was finally cleared for him, it was too late to reach Modane, and so he stopped at a wayside inn, where he placed, in closing the *Sentimental Journey*, the delicate adventure with the Piedmontese lady and the maid of Lyonnais. To Sterne, who had none of the poet Gray's passion for the sublime, it had all been a perilous tour of "sudden turns and dangers"—"difficulties of getting up", and "horrors of getting down"—through a province where nature lay in wild disorder, with little to give, except a sheltered habitation, to a "poor, patient, quiet, honest, people".

Eight slight letters—one of them unpublished and two of them mere notes to Panchaud his banker—supplemented by little else, must carry us with Sterne through Italy as far south as Naples and back on the return tour. Letters to his wife which he intermittently posted, and a large bundle of papers which he is said to have brought home with him, containing his impressions of the manners and customs of the people along with incidents by the way, have gone with the wreck of time. It must have been, if his reckoning was correct, on the evening of November 14 when Sterne en-

tered Turin, the first Italian city that he ever saw, through a *corso* of over-arching trees, ten miles in length and as straight as a line, leading to the spacious Piazza Castello, where stands the old royal palace, and near which Smollett a few months before had taken up his quarters. Sterne's agreeable emotions on entering a city of wide and regular avenues, like the Via di Po, flanked with colonnades against the sun, may perhaps be inferred from his remark about old Paris, whose streets, he said, were so narrow that a man could never tell on which side he was walking. It was his first intention to make Turin only a stopping-place on the way to Milan; but continual rains, which had laid the intervening country under water, rendered it impossible for him to proceed for a fortnight. It was "a joyous fortnight". Within twenty-four hours after his arrival he received invitations to "a dozen houses"; the following day he was presented to the King of Sardinia; and when that ceremony was over, he had his "hands full of engagements".

Only two other Englishmen were then in Turin—"Mr. Ogilby", who permitted Sterne to take down his name for five sets of the *Sentimental Journey* on imperial paper, and the young Sir James Macdonald of Skye, over whose death the Western Isles were soon to lament, as the Marcellus upon whom they had rested their hopes. Nothing else lets us into the charm of Sterne's personality quite so well as the ease with which he attached himself to young men, who choose their companions by a subtle instinct, which they never stop to explain, and could not explain if they tried. Between Sterne and Macdonald it was attraction at first sight. The young baronet, only twenty-four years old, united the best traditions of Eton and Oxford for scholarship with uncommonly fine manners, large talents for business, and "the patriarchal spirit", says Boswell, "of a great Highland chieftain". After sharing in "all kinds of honours" at Turin, the two men bade their friends adieu with regret, and started on November 28 for the south by a long detour, which included many of the towns of northern Italy. Macdonald was longing to see Rome; and Sterne, whose health again showed signs of breaking, thought it best to winter in

Naples. Writing to Panchaud on business when they reached Florence, Sterne incidentally gave his delightful itinerary up to that point. "I have been a month", he said, "passing the plains of Lombardie—stopping in my way at Milan, Parma, Placenza, and Bologna—with weather as delicious as a kindly April in England, and have been three days in crossing a part of the Apenines cover'd with thick snow—sad transition!"

At Milan occurred an adventure which he tucked into the *Sentimental Journey*. "I was going", as Sterne elaborated the story, "one evening to Martini's concert at Milan, and was just entering the door of the hall, when the Marquisina di F * * * was coming out in a sort of a hurry—she was almost upon me before I saw her; so I gave a spring to one side to let her pass—She had done the same, and on the same side too: so we ran our heads together: she instantly got to the other side to get out: I was just as fortunate as she had been; for I had sprung to that side, and opposed her passage again—We both flew together to the other side, and then back—and so on—it was ridiculous; we both blush'd intolerably; so I did at last the thing I should have done at first—I stood stock still, and the Marquisina had no more difficulty. I had no power to go into the room, till I had made her so much reparation as to wait and follow her with my eye to the end of the passage—She look'd back twice. * * * I ran and begg'd pardon for the embarrassment I had given her, saying it was my intention to have made her way. * * * I begg'd to hand her to her coach—so we went down the stairs, stopping at every third step to talk of the concert and the adventure—Upon my word, Madame, said I, when I had handed her in, I made six different efforts to let you go out—And I made six efforts, replied she, to let you enter—I wish to heaven you would make a seventh, said I—With all my heart, said she, making room—Life is too short to be long about the forms of it—so I instantly stepp'd in, and she carried me home with her—And what became of the concert, St. Cecilia, who, I suppose, was at it, knows more than I. * * * The connection which arose out of the translation, gave me more pleasure

than any one I had the honour to make in Italy." The woman of this sentimental encounter was none other than the beautiful and cultivated Marchesa Fagniani, who became the friend of George Selwyn and the mother of Maria Fagniani, wife of the third Marquis of Hertford.

Sterne allowed only three days for Florence, or just time enough to exchange civilities with Sir Horace Mann, the English envoy to the Court of Tuscany. Since 1760 Mann had been reading the successive instalments of *Tristram Shandy*, which diverted him extremely, though he thought there was some "humbugging" in the style; at least men did not talk and write that way when he was last in England.* Macdonald was also known to Mann through letters from their mutual friend, Horace Walpole, who described him as "a very extraordinary young man for variety and learning, * * * rather too wise for his age, and too fond of showing it", but likely to "choose to know less" after seeing more of the world.† Sterne and Macdonald were dined at the envoy's with two young men of rank, whom they perhaps knew beforehand. One was Earl Cowper, subsequently created a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, who was held bound to Florence by a tender passion for a Tuscan lady; and the other was the Duke of Portland, the future Prime Minister. Sterne of course visited the Duomo, Santa Croce, and the Uffizi Gallery with his friends; and yet the only positive evidence pointing that way is his banter of Smollett in the *Sentimental Journey* for seeing "no beauty in the features" of the Venus of Medici, and for thinking the attitude "awkward and out of character".

As the travellers drew near Rome, Sterne became impatient for the morning when he might "tread the Vatican and be introduced to all the saints of the Pantheon". Two weeks were set aside for sight-seeing in the imperial city. There are vague traditions that Sterne was several times received by the Pope, and introduced to the noble families of Doria and Santa Croce. Though all details of his reception

* D. Doran, *Mann and Manners*, II, 71 (London, 1876).

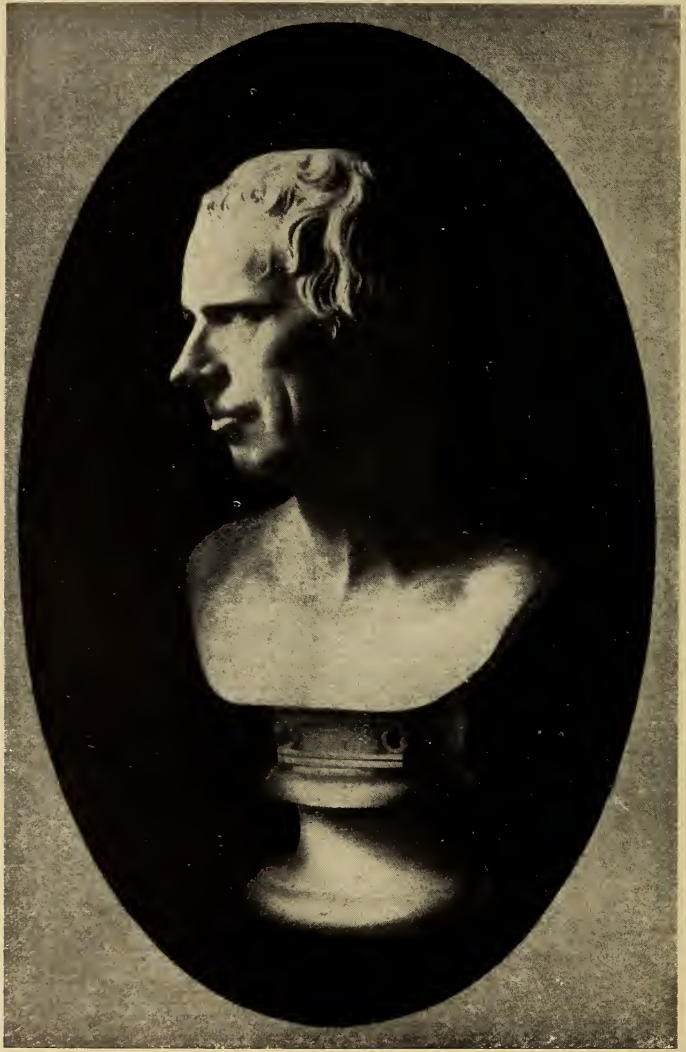
† For Walpole on Macdonald, see especially *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, VI, 305-6, 313, 418, 423.

are lacking, it is safe to say that Sterne could not have stayed in Rome a fortnight or more without his presence being widely known, nor have forgone the humorous delight of an audience with the head of the Church that he had so abused in his sermons. The intimation in the *Sentimental Journey* that he encountered Smollett in "the grand portico of the Pantheon", and overheard the satirist say, as he was leaving, that it was "nothing but a huge cockpit", can not be accepted literally; for Smollett was then in England. If the two antipathies ever met face to face, it was two years before at Montpellier.

At Rome Sterne and Macdonald overtook "a young gentleman of fortune" named Errington, a friend of three years' standing, with whom they journeyed south to Naples, just in time to witness a fresh outburst of Vesuvius.* By the middle of January they were all established together in the same house, said to have been the Casa di Mansel; and near them were scattered a score of their countrymen, including "Mr. Symonds, a person of learning and character", who may be identified with John Symonds, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in succession to Gray. The company had its own pastimes—sight-seeing, games, and conversation over news from home as it came in letters and in the *London Chronicle*—and invitations out with the most fashionable Neapolitan society. "We have a jolly carnival of it", Sterne wrote to Hall-Stevenson in February, "nothing but operas—punchinellos—festinos and masquerades——We (that is, *nous autres*) are all dressing out for one this night at the Princess Francavivalla [Francavilla], which is to be superb.——The English dine with her (exclusive) and so much for small chat—except that I saw a little comedy acted last week with more expression and spirit, and true character, than I shall see one hastily again".

Neapolitan gaiety under a mild sun agreed perfectly with Sterne's constitution. "I find myself infinitely better than I was", he wrote to his daughter Lydia, after three weeks at Naples, "and hope to have added at least ten years to my life by this journey to Italy—the climate is heavenly, and

* *St. James's Chronicle*, February 22-25, 1766.



Laurence Sterne

From the replica of a bust by Nollekens at Skelton Castle

I find new principles of health in me, which I have been long a stranger to." Thus improving, even "growing fat, sleek, and well liking", Sterne stayed on until about the first of April; and then posted back to Rome with Macdonald, Errington and Symonds, in time for the novel and impressive ceremonies of Holy Week. In the interval of waiting, he sat to Nollekens for a portrait bust in terra-cotta, which deservedly brought the sculptor "into great notice". The face, as one views it in profile, has none of the pinched Voltairean features of the Carmontelle portrait; it is large and full, indicative of renewed strength and vigour. "With this performance", says the sculptor's biographer, "Nollekens continued to be pleased even to his second childhood, and often mentioned a picture which Dance had made of him leaning upon Sterne's head."* After Easter Sterne's little company of travellers broke up. The first to leave was Symonds, who was going home through France. At his departure, Sterne gave him a note of introduction, as yet unpublished, to Dr. Jamme, an old Toulouse friend then in Paris, which is most interesting as Sterne's last word on the benefit and pleasure he had received from his sojourn in Italy. "I am much recover'd", he wrote on Easter Sunday, the nineteenth of April, "by the Neapolitan Air—I have been here in my return three Weeks, seeing over again what I saw first in my way to Naples. * * * We have pass'd a jolly laughing winter of it—and having changed the Scene for Rome; we are passing as merry a Spring as hearts could wish. I wish my friends no better fortune in this world, than to go at this rate—*haec est Vita dissolutorum*."

At the date of this letter and for some time before, it had been Sterne's design to travel leisurely homewards through Germany, as companion to Errington. They were to start "in a few days" for Venice, where Sterne expected to meet "many worthy men" whom he esteemed, and proceed thence to Venice, Dresden, Berlin, and Spa, and so on to England, either through Holland or by a loop which should give them a week or two in Paris. With this in mind while at Naples,

* J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, edited by Gosse, 34 (London, 1895).

Sterne requested Panchaud to draw him a small letter of credit upon Mr. Watson, his correspondent at Venice, and to forward all his letters thither by Ascension week in care of the banker. Hall-Stevenson was also commissioned to obtain for him a letter of recommendation from Pitt or Lord Hertford to Lord Stormont, the English Ambassador at Vienna, "importing that I am not fallen from the clouds". At other times, opportunities of leading young men about Europe had come to Sterne, but he had let them all pass, expressing, as he did so, either a dislike of the gentleman in question or of a mode of travel which commonly made the tutor subservient to the whims of a mere boy. In this instance, however, the prospects were good for an enjoyable tour, which would cost him nothing beyond a little pocket money "in case of sickness and accidents". "As I know him", he wrote of Errington to Hall-Stevenson, "to be a good-hearted young gentleman, I have no doubt of making it answer both his views and mine—at least I am persuaded we shall return home together, as we set out, with friendship and goodwill."

But for some reason Sterne changed his plans at the last moment, and decided to go home directly, either over the old route through Piedmont and Savoy, or more likely—after revisiting Siena and Florence—by boat from Leghorn to Marseilles, and thence to Paris and Calais. Was there a quarrel or a misunderstanding, such as Sterne had often seen, and feared for himself in these relationships? It may have been so. And yet what drew Sterne away from Errington into France was really, I think, a desire to visit his wife and daughter, and to persuade them to return with him to Coxwold. Such at least is the tenor of a letter to Lydia. He felt some anxiety, too, for their health. Mrs. Sterne was still troubled with rheumatism; and both herself and Lydia were trying to rid themselves of an ague which they had contracted at Tours during the winter. Be the reason what it may, Sterne and Errington separated towards the end of April, leaving Macdonald behind them ill at Rome. The young Scot had been in miserable health all winter. While at Naples he came down with a malarial fever which assumed the deceitful complexion of rheumatism; but when spring

approached he seemed to be recovering. Then came a relapse in Easter week at Rome. No one, however, felt any uneasiness as to the ultimate issue. His stomach, his physician told Macdonald, would soon regain its tone, and the palpitation of which he complained, "must cease in time". But the palpitation ceased only with the beating of his heart on the twenty-sixth of July. To his memory, his mother, Lady Margaret Macdonald, daughter of the Earl of Eglinton, erected a monument in the parish church of Sleat, for which his friend George, Lord Lyttelton, wrote a long inscription, saying that at his death in Rome "such extraordinary honours were paid to his memory as had never graced that of any other British subject since the death of Sir Philip Sidney". Any one who doubts the appropriateness of the comparison has only to read Macdonald's letters to his mother from Rome during his illness. "There is no circumstance of danger and pain", he wrote the night before his death, "of which I have not had the experience." But he kept his condition from his mother until the last moment, supporting his painful illness "with admirable patience and fortitude".*

Near the first of May, Sterne entered France, ready to pay his respects to his wife; but he was uncertain where to look for her; for she had long since left Tours on a ramble with Lydia whither caprice might lead her. It was "a wild-geese chace" for the husband through "five or six different towns", until he discovered a trail which took him through Dijon, far off his route, into the old province of Franche Comté or Upper Burgundy. "Poor woman!" he wrote to Hall-Stevenson after he had found her, "she was very cordial, &c. and begs to stay another year or so—my Lydia pleases me much—I found her greatly improved in everything I wish'd her—I am most unaccountably well, and most unaccountably nonsensical—'tis at least a proof of good spirits, which is a sign and token given me in these latter days that I must take up again the pen—In faith I think I shall die with it in my hand, but I shall live these ten

* See especially Boswell's "Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides" in *Life of Samuel Johnson*, edited by P. Fitzgerald, III, 297-99 (London, 1874).

years, my Antony, notwithstanding the fears of my wife, whom I left most melancholy on that account."

Retracing his steps towards Dijon, he turned out of his road to "a delicious Chateau of the Countess of M——", an old Parisian friend, doubtless, who was at her country-seat with a house full of guests. There Sterne rested for a week, "patriarching it * * * with her ladyship and half a dozen of very handsome and agreeable ladies". It was "a delicious part of the world", and "most celestial weather", so that they could "lie all day, without damps, on the grass"; and twice a day conversation was "inspired * * * with the best Burgundy that grows upon the mountains". From this charming retreat, which reads like a scene out of Boccaccio, Sterne broke away on the twenty-sixth of May; and, to make up for lost time, posted night and day to Paris, "where"—he informed Hall-Stevenson—"I shall arrive in two days, and just wind myself up, when I am there, enough to roll on to Calais—so I hope to sup with you the king's birth day, according to a plan of sixteen days standing".

If Sterne kept the covenant to celebrate his Majesty's birthday with Hall-Stevenson, who was then in London, he had only three days for winding himself up in Paris. In passing through the city, he fell in with the Abbé Galiani, the Neapolitan envoy to France, a savant and wit near the first rank. Their conversation, which likely occurred over the dessert at Baron d'Holbach's, turned to Sterne's sojourn in Italy. Galiani, who looked upon the sentimental humourist as rather a bore, nevertheless set down one *bon mot* to his credit. Years afterwards, when recalled by the King of Naples, he wrote to Madame d'Epinay, saying, "The only good thing which that tiresome Monsieur Sterne ever uttered was his remark to me one day that it was far better to die in Paris than to live in Naples."* The influence of his Italian journey thus fading into the background, Sterne hastened home to catch the end of the London season. His valet, retaining the pretty name of La Fleur, which Sterne

* *Lettres de l'Abbé Galiani à Madame d'Epinay*, II, 137 (Paris, 1881). For the meeting between Galiani and Sterne see *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet*, I, 128 (Paris, 1821).

had given to him out of current French comedy, is said to have married one of the girls of Montreuil for whom he was to bring a pardon from Rome, and to have opened a public house in Calais for English sailors navigating packet boats across the Channel. Ill luck attended the enterprise after the outbreak of war between France and England, and La Fleur took up his career as valet again. The story may be mere fiction, and yet it seems probable enough to be true.*

* An account of La Fleur and of Sterne's journey from the valet's point of view appeared in the *European Magazine* in a long article running through September, October, and November, 1790. Parts of the narrative were reprinted by William Davis in his *Olio*, 25-32 (London, 1814). The story, although purporting to have come from the lips of La Fleur himself, is quite untrustworthy as a whole; but it has behind it a real La Fleur and vague traditions.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAST VOLUME OF TRISTRAM SHANDY

JUNE 1766—MARCH 1767

MIDSUMMER saw Sterne once more in the “peaceful retreat” of his parish, meditating the maxim that “man’s happiness depends upon himself”, irrespective of where he may be, whether at Naples or at Coxwold. But with the best disposition in the world to be consoled by the shreds of philosophy, the moralist was ill at ease, moody, and inclined to keep close within his shell. This year we read of no visits to Skelton, Scarborough, or Harrogate. Even invitations to Newburgh Priory, less than two miles away, were accepted only because they could not be avoided, and with the complaint that these courtesies of his patron oppressed him to death. His visitations of Alne and Tollerton also, which he usually made in person when in Yorkshire, were performed this summer by his surrogate. And so nearly everything known about Sterne until he went up to London at Christmas points to the seclusion of Shandy Hall.

The reasons for his depressed spirits are quite obvious. Hemorrhages, from which he seems to have been free while abroad, set in again, and increased through the autumn until he had three in one month. Another source of trouble lay in his finances. If the cost of his sojourn in Italy had been lightened by the generosity of Errington and Macdonald, the gain thereby had been many times offset by the expenses of Mrs. Sterne, for whose mode of life the old allowance of two hundred guineas a year was proving inadequate. She was spending nearly double the sum. To balance his account to date, he directed Panchaud to draw upon Becket for a hundred and sixty pounds, that the banker’s books might be clear for fresh credit—for fifty pounds, for thirty pounds, etc., just as Mrs. Sterne might need these sums. Sterne,

perplexed though he was at his wife's extravagances, uttered no word of complaint. "You may rely", he wrote to Panchaud, "in case it ever happens that she should draw for fifty or a hundred pounds extraordinary, that it and every demand shall be punctually paid—and with proper thanks; and for this the whole Shandean family are ready to stand security." Mrs. Sterne's large expenditures, it is but just to add, were partly occasioned by ill health, which drove her from place to place, in hope of improvement by change of climate. One letter after another arrived at Shandy Hall from Lydia, describing her mother's alarming symptoms, and so wrought upon Sterne that he imagined his wife was "going the way of us all". She was so ill that at one time he began to make preparations to start for the south of France, in order to administer spiritual comfort in the last stages of the melancholy scene. But the journey proved to be unnecessary, for Mrs. Sterne recovered under the influence of liberal remittances. Besides the affairs of his wife, urgent parish business, with which Sterne had fallen out of tune, entered Shandy Hall to disturb further his repose. The enclosure of Stillington Common and certain fields and meadows dispersed in the parish, which had been a question for some years, was now authorised by a private Act of Parliament, for which he had petitioned along with Stephen Croft and seven small landowners. Under the Act were appointed three commissioners to make the awards, with whom it was necessary for Sterne to meet, in order to safeguard his rights as vicar of the parish. In these affairs there were always disputes and differences over conflicting claims and minor questions of roads, hedges, and gates, all of which Sterne summed up in a letter to Hall-Stevenson, saying, "I'm tormented to death and the devil by my Stillington Inclosure".

But we should not draw too dark a picture of Sterne's distresses, for the pliability of his temper always saved him. In July his vanity was flattered by a letter from the negro Ignatius Sancho, who felt constrained to tell the reverend author how much he had been benefited by books which are "universally read and universally admired". Sancho was a

slave, born on a ship plying in the trade between Africa and the Spanish Main. Baptised at Carthagena under the name of Ignatius, he was brought to England when a boy; and subsequently the surname of Sancho was given to him, because of some fancied resemblance that his master saw between him and Don Quixote's squire. Of quick intelligence, he learned to read and write, and even attempted the rôles of Othello and Oroonoko on the stage. At the date of his letter to Sterne, he was in the service of George, the fourth Duke of Montagu, who for small services gave him leisure to read and to cultivate his tastes in many ways. Like "millions" of others, he was in love with the "amiable" my uncle Toby; and as for Trim, he "would walk ten miles in the dog-days, to shake hands with the honest Corporal"; but his heart had been touched and amended most by Yorick's sermons, especially by the discourse on the troubles of life as exemplified in Job's misfortunes, containing a sorrowful passage on the bitter draught of slavery which untold millions are compelled to drink to the dregs. Can you not, Sancho besought Sterne, "give half an hour's attention to slavery as it is at this day undergone in the West Indies? That subject handled in your own manner, would ease the Yoke of many, perhaps occasion a reformation throughout our Islands——But should *one* be the better for it——gracious God! What a feast! Very sure I am, that Yorick is an Epicure in Charity. * * * ——Dear Sir, think in me you behold the uplifted hands of Millions of my Moorish brethren. Grief (you pathetically observe) is eloquent——figure to yourself their attitudes——hear their supplicatory addresses——humanity must comply".* When Sancho's letter reached Shandy Hall, Sterne had just completed, by "a strange coincidence", "a tender tale of the sorrows of a friendless poor negro-girl"; and while his eyes were "still smarting" with it, he wrote back to say that he would weave the story, if it could be managed, into the next volume of *Shandy*, in the hope that it might help lift the "sad shade" which slavery was casting over the world.

A month after this affecting correspondence, the parson was called to York to give a dignified close to the great races.

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

This year all classes, from the nobility down to adventurers, poured into the city, and all entertainments were on a grand scale, in honour of Sterne's friend, the young Duke of York, who condescended to be present throughout the entire gala week. The festivities began on Tuesday the nineteenth of August, when the officials of the city in their formalities waited upon the duke, and congratulated him on his safe arrival. Then followed every day the races on the field of Knavesmire, with a play at the theatre and a ball at the Assembly Rooms in the evening, to say nothing of cock-fights, and noisy scenes of chance at the coffee-houses, where Yorkshire squires fell easy victims to professional sharpers down from London, or lost their purses while watching the game, nobody knew just how or just where. On Saturday night ended a week such as no one could remember; and on the next morning everybody went in sober mood to the cathedral to listen to the moral of it all. As described in the newspapers of the day, it was an impressive scene in the great church. His Royal Highness, as the central figure, was escorted to the west door of the minster, "where he was received * * * by the Residentiary and Choir, the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, who ushered him up to the Archbishop's Throne, where he heard an excellent Discourse from the Rev. Mr. Sterne".* What the text was it is impossible to determine from the sermons of Sterne afterwards published, several of which, running upon a contrast between a godless and a Christian life, were appropriate enough to the occasion, though none contains the sure clue. It was Sterne's last sermon in St. Peter's, where he won his laurels nearly twenty years before.

On Monday York reckoned up £10,000 as her gains from the races; the duke set out for Scarborough with his retinue; and Sterne, though he may have accompanied his royal friend to the waters, most likely returned to Coxwold to complete *Tristram Shandy*. During his long absence abroad, Sterne had lost interest in the work, which, however broadly its satire expanded at times under his hand, was essentially local in inspiration. His design now was to wind up my

* *St. James's Chronicle*, August 26-28, 1766.

uncle Toby's amours in a single volume for next winter, and then to proceed with an account of his own travels on the Continent. Thus refreshed by a change of theme, he thought that he might again take up the Shandy household with greater zest. Still, there was some fire left for Sterne in the old subject, though it had narrowed down to my uncle Toby and the widow Wadman. In nearly Sterne's best manner was the attack of the captain in military form on the heart of the self-seeking widow, with their conversations over my uncle Toby's wound in the groin, as they sat on the sofa in the parlour, while the author stood by to translate into words what was going on in Mrs. Wadman's fancy, as she blushed, turned pale, resumed her natural colour, or cast her look towards the door. And if we must have a cock-and-bull story, it would be difficult to match the one closing the book, reminiscent of the days when Sterne was a farmer at Sutton-on-the-Forest. In the amusing story which the corporal told of his brother Tom's courtship of the Jew's widow who sold sausages at Lisbon, appeared, it may be, the episode of the friendless negro girl which Sterne had promised Sancho. Though not going very deeply into the question of slavery, it was a very "pretty picture", my uncle Toby thought, as he imagined the poor girl in the sausage shop, "with a bunch of white feathers slightly tied to the end of a long cane, flapping away flies—not killing them". The narrative, scant as it was, satisfied Sancho and connected his name with Sterne. The polite world, who soon knew why the Moorish girl got into *Shandy*, courted the sentimental negro, and Gainsborough painted for them his portrait. In the years that followed, it became the fashion among the tender-hearted to rid themselves of flies, not by torturing or killing them, but by gently brushing them aside or spouting cold water upon them.

While Sterne was putting the last strokes of humour to his book, the troubled skies which had hung over him during the summer and autumn were fast clearing. The waste lands of Stillington were surveyed for a just division; and good news arrived from the south of France. Mrs. Sterne, said letters from Lydia asking for another hundred guineas,

was now "out of danger"; and to complete the cure, Sterne sent her some of Huxham's Tincture of the Bark, the current remedy against agues. Wife and daughter, having ended their summer travels, rented a chateau near Avignon, in the picturesque valley of the Sorgue running down from the Fountain of Vaucluse, where they planned to settle for good, after a short visit to Marseilles for the Christmas carnival. They remained at Marseilles rather longer than they expected, owing, doubtless, to its large and agreeable English colony, composed this winter of "many young men of fortune", including the son and grandson of Lord Southwell, who were abroad with Edmond Malone,* the future editor of Shakespeare. Lydia's heart, however, was at Vaucluse, amid the romantic scenes where Petrarch lived, and wrote the sonnets to Laura. The pretty chateau which the genteel ladies chose, had "seven rooms of a floor—half furnished with tapestry, half with blue taffety",—and carried, with an annual rental of sixteen guineas, permission to fish in the stream, and an allowance every week of partridges and other game. Near them lived the Abbé de Sade, who had just written a book on Petrarch, mainly to prove that Laura was the wife of one of his ancestors. Calling almost every day for quiet talk, the Abbé overlooked Lydia's French as she was practising it on a translation of her father's sermons. There came to the chateau also a French marquis, who offered Lydia his heart and twenty thousand livres a year. One day he made a coarse remark to the Abbé, apparently about Laura, which displeased Lydia and brought the romance to a quick conclusion. Except for the ill-breeding of the marquis, all these little details, reaching Sterne post by post, delighted the fond father. Again and again he pictured Lydia fishing by the Fountain of Vaucluse, translating his sermon on the House of Mourning, and reading or listening to the story of Petrarch and Laura. Only one element was wanting to the sentimental scene. Lydia broke her guitar and could not replace it at Marseilles. As soon as Sterne heard of the disaster, he besought Panchaud to make his girl happy by sending one on from Paris. "It must be strung", were his

* James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone*, 23-29 (London, 1860).

precise directions in the only Italian sentence surviving from his pen, "with cat-gut and of five cords—*si chiama in Italiano la chitera di cinque corde*". Thereafter Lydia might sit on the banks of the Sorgue, fishing or playing her guitar at will.

In good spirits again, though greatly weakened by recent illness, Sterne posted to London towards the close of December, in advance of a heavy fall of snow, which blocked travel or made it dangerous during half of January. As it was, he had a hard time of it in reaching town. "I arrived here but yesterday", he wrote on the first day of the new year, "after a terrible journey of most inhospitable weather."* Unusual interest centers round the lodgings which he selected this winter, for in them he was to take his final rest a year later. They were in the most fashionable part of the town, over a wig-maker's shop, on the west side of Old Bond Street, off Piccadilly. The building—it was then number 41†—stood for more than a century much as it was in Sterne's day, except that the wig-maker gave place, in the revolution of society, to a cheesemonger, and the cheesemonger in turn to a picture dealer. Finally, some years ago, all was swept away for a modern picture gallery. From these apartments in Bond Street, Sterne sent out many letters to his friends, which, when read side by side with the newspapers of the time, will enable us to see Yorick as he enters and treads through another round of pleasure among new as well as old scenes and faces.

Sterne's first day in London left him melancholy, for he was all tired out, and most of his friends were still in the country for the holidays. Nobody, he complained, was at St. James's Coffee-House, where he just stepped in, except Sir Charles Danvers, and "Gilly" Williams, who was in flight for Brighton. But a few days later all was changed; and the new year opened gaily for him with theatres, dinners, and assemblies. On the second of January, Garrick brought out at Drury Lane a romantic drama called *Cymon*, supposed

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

† *Notes and Queries*, fourth series, XII, 158-59. It is not quite certain that Sterne had not previously occupied these lodgings.

to have been his own in collaboration with Master Arne, the musician. For a month London ran mad over its songs, costumes, and spectacular setting. Sterne, who always had a box at his disposal for any evening, was present on the great night of the eighth when the king attended with his royal party. He also sometimes dropped in at Covent Garden, where Shuter was playing *Falstaff* and the *Miser*; but the house he found empty except for "citizens' children and apprentices". Murphy's *School for Guardians*, which he saw at the rival theatre on the tenth, the friend of Garrick pronounced "a most miserable affair", which barely survived a first performance, so completely had *Cymon* drawn off the polite world, which filled Drury Lane "brim full every night". In these latter days, the theatre was thus becoming for Sterne more than ever a place to go to with the company where he happened to be dining, to see, meet, and converse with friends.

He dined on a Sunday at Lord Ossory's with "the old folks" and "the young virgins", and went afterwards "not much to my credit", he said, to the Duchess of Hamilton's, for "there were no virgins there". The Lady Hamilton of whose drawing-room Sterne spoke so ungallantly, was one of those Miss Gunnings whom everybody declared, when the two lucky Irish girls first came upon the town penniless, and quickly won their coronets, "the handsomest women alive". The duchess was still a beautiful woman, but beauty without innocence or without wit—one or the other—had no attraction for Yorick.

Sterne was present, we may be certain, at the Earl of Shelburne's levee on the twelfth; where or elsewhere he apparently fell in with the Virginian Arthur Lee, the youngest of three famous brothers, of whom the others were Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot. The young Virginian, barely twenty-six years old, had been educated at Eton and had taken a degree in medicine at Edinburgh. After the grand tour and a visit home, he had returned to England "as special agent"* of the Massachusetts Bay

* The *Lee MSS.* (Harvard University library). Among them is an undated letter from Shelburne, inviting Lee to Bath. See also R. H.

Colony. The Stamp Act repealed, he was then negotiating with Shelburne on the fisheries. Boswell, who had associated with him at Edinburgh, trapped Dr. Johnson into a dinner with the "patriot" and Wilkes; and Sterne, in return for the Virginian's interest in his books, introduced him to his friends and acted as his adviser in sentimental attachments. "The idol of your heart", he wrote to him recklessly, before the year was over, "is one of ten thousand. The Duke of — has long sighed in vain—and can you suppose a woman will listen to you, that is proof against titles, stars, and red ribbands? * * * Take my advice, and pay your addresses to Miss — she esteems you, and time will wear off an attachment which has taken so deep a root in your heart.—I pity you from my soul—but we are all born with passions which ebb and flow (else they would play the devil with us) to different objects." Franklin was also in London representing the colony of Pennsylvania. Meeting Sterne somewhere, he gave in his name for Sterne's sermons promised in the autumn. Sterne put him down in his private book for two sets, and—indicative of Franklin's business methods—wrote after the entry the word *paid*.*

The first week or two Sterne was also much in the society of the Duke of York. His Royal Highness, who had been spending Christmas in the country with Lord Spencer at Althorp, returned to town three or four days after Sterne's arrival, and began a series of "grand entertainments" at his house in Pall Mall.† Of this young gentleman, Sterne liked to write familiarly, as if he were, as was likely true, a favourite guest. "The Duke of York", he casually remarked in a letter to Lord Fauconberg, "was to have had a play-house of his own, and had studied his part in the Fair Penitent, and made Garrick act it twice on purpose to profit by it; but the King, 'tis said, has desired the Duke to give up

Lee, *Life of Arthur Lee*, I, 185-90 (Boston, 1829). Sterne's "A. L—e, Esq.", as his name appears in the published correspondence between the two friends, can not be identified positively with this Arthur Lee; but the fact that both Sterne and the Virginian were associating intimately with Wilkes and Shelburne renders the identification very probable.

* *Whitefoord Papers*, 235.

† *Lloyd's Evening Post*, Jan. 2-5, and 5-7, 1767.

the part and the project with it.” Though the duke indeed stopped work on his own play-house in the palace, Sterne nevertheless had an opportunity of seeing him play Lothario to Lady Stanhope’s Calista at the private theatre of their friends the Delavals.* At the Duke of York’s table the humourist met the Earl of March, better known in social annals by his subsequent title, the Duke of Queensberry, or “old Q”, as he was called in his age, after fifty brilliant years in the service of pleasure. The earl was a small, keen-eyed man of hot temper, at that time one of the lords of his Majesty’s bedchamber. With this nobleman and “a large company of the Duke of York’s people”, Sterne dined on the eighth, before going to the theatre to see the king; but the conversation seems to have fallen short of his expectations; for “I came away”, said the guest, “just as wise as I went.” The acquaintance with the Earl of March never led to any intimacy.

It was, however, in this set that Sterne most likely discovered, soon after coming to London, Commodore James, a friend who will pass from these memoirs only with the death of the author. As a boy, William James had an adventurous career on the Spanish Main, which prepared him for one still more adventurous in the Bombay marine service. Under his command, the sea was swept of pirates which had long imperilled the trade of the East India Company. With reckless daring, says the historian Orme,† he pushed his ships into the very harbours of the pirate-chief Angria—first at Severndroog and then at Gheriah—and blew up fortifications which were supposed impregnable. And when news reached Bombay early in 1757 that the French had declared war against England, he was chosen of all others to carry it on to Clive, then in the valley of the Hooghly. He made the voyage up the Bay of Bengal against the northeast monsoon in an incredibly short time, by discovering a passage which thereafter rendered winter navigation of the bay free from great danger. With a fortune

* Walpole, *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, VII, 112.

† *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in India*, I, 411-14 (Fourth edition, London, 1799). The first edition of the first volume appeared in 1763.

won in prize-money, Commodore James returned to England in 1759, married a most attractive wife—Anne, daughter of Edmond Goddard of Hartham in Wiltshire—and purchased a villa at Eltham within easy reach of London. Orme's story of his exploits brought him into quick notice. He became chairman of the board of directors of the East India Company; and the king subsequently honoured him with a baronetcy.

When Sterne knew him, the commodore was living for the winter in one of the large houses in Gerrard Street, Soho, suitable for the entertainments expected of him, and for the reception of visitors from India, who seem to have imposed upon his hospitality. His wife was a woman of fine manners and character, very fond of a pretty daughter that reminded Sterne of his own child as she had been in past years. Once admitted into the family circle, Sterne let no Sunday pass, unless ill health prevented, without dining with his dear friends in Gerrard Street. After one of these visits, he wrote to Lydia: "I wish I had you with me—and I would introduce you to one of the most amiable and gentlest of beings, whom I have just been with, * * * a Mrs. James, the wife of as worthy a man as I ever met with—I esteem them both. He possesses every manly virtue—honour and bravery are his characteristicks, which have distinguished him nobly in several instances—I shall make you better acquainted with his character, by sending Orme's History, with the books you desired—and it is well worth your reading; for Orme is an elegant writer, and a just one; he pays no man a compliment at the expence of truth.—Mrs. James is kind—and friendly—of a sentimental turn of mind—and so sweet a disposition, that she is too good for the world she lives in—Just God! if all were like her, what a life would this be!" Nothing ever occurred to disturb this friendship, which continued to the last dismal scene.

Dinners and social functions, so necessary to Sterne's enjoyment, were checked by the snows of January, which covered England two or three feet deep. "When we got up yesterday morning", he wrote to Lord Fauconberg on the ninth, "the streets were four inches deep in snow—it has

set in now with the most intense cold. I could scarce lay in bed for it, and this morning more snow again." And at the end of a week, when wild rumours of accidents and sufferings had reached London: "There is a dead stagnation of everything, and scarce any talk but about the damages done over the Kingdom by this cruel storm. * * * We had reports yesterday that the York stage coach with fourteen people in and about it, were drown'd by mistaking a bridge—it was contradicted at night—as are half the morning reports in town." During the progress of the storm, while most people were content to remain indoors and wait for the inevitable thaw, Sterne ploughed through snow up to his knees, on an "intensely cold" Sunday morning, to the king's levee and afterwards on to church, where to his disappointment few were found in either place. At length a thaw set in, the streets became passable, though filled with slush, and everybody who could obtain a ticket, turned out on the night of the fifteenth for Mrs. Cornelys's great assembly, the first of the year.

This was just then the most fashionable resort in London. "All the high and low demireps of the town", says Thackeray's Barry Lyndon, "gathered there, from his Grace of Ancaster down to my countryman, poor Mr. Oliver Goldsmith the poet, and from the Duchess of Kingston down to the Bird of Paradise." The woman who called herself Mrs. Theresa Cornelys had been long known under other names, as an operatic singer in London and continental theatres. Abandoning the stage in 1760, she purchased Carlisle House in Soho, which she turned into an assembly for a "society of ladies and gentlemen" with herself as manager. Little noticed at first, the enterprise flourished beyond expectation, so that she was able to enlarge and redecorate the mansion, hanging the "vast" assembly room with blue satin and the rest of the suite with yellow. At appointed times, widely advertised in the newspapers, Mrs. Cornelys opened her house to "the nobility and gentry" for "a grand concert of vocal and instrumental music", to be followed by "a grand ball", before and after which were served "tea, coffee, chocolate, and other refreshments". All details of these

famous nights were planned and carried out under the personal direction of the hostess herself. "Those Ladies and Gentlemen", ran the usual advertisement on the day before an assembly, "who come in carriages * * * are requested to be very particular in ordering their coachmen to the door in Soho-square, and with their horses' heads towards Greek Street; chairs to the usual door.—The tickets (which are limited as to number) will be delivered out this day at Arthur's in St. James's Street, and at the office in Soho-square, at a guinea each, which will admit one gentleman or two ladies. * * * The house will be opened precisely at nine."* So great was the demand for tickets, though rather expensive, that they could hardly be obtained either for love or for money. But Sterne, who had means of finding one where others complained of failure, made the acquaintance this year of Mrs. Cornelys, the professional entertainer of rank and royalty. The next morning he wrote to Lord Fauconberg briefly but enthusiastically of the occasion, adding a word relative to his patron's brother and family: "Last night it thaw'd; the concert at Soho top full—and was (this is for the ladies) the best assembly and the best concert I ever had the honour to be at. Lady Anne had the goodness to challenge me, or I had not known her, she was so prudently muffled up; Lord Bellasyse, I never saw him look so well; Lady Bellasyse recovers *à merveille*—and your little niece I believe grows like flax."

The literary event for people who frequented Carlisle House was the appearance of the ninth and last volume of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, on Friday, January 30, 1767.† The two-shilling pamphlet, authenticated by the humourist's signature over the first chapter, had as motto a sentence which Burton attributed to Scaliger when beseeching Cardan not to censure him if his treatise seemed too light: "*Si quid urbaniusculè lusum a nobis, per Musas et Charitas et omnium poetarum Numina, Oro te, ne me malè capias.*"‡ As in the first instalment of his

* *Public Advertiser*, March 30, 1767.

† *St. James's Chronicle*, Jan. 29-31, 1767.

‡ *Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited by Shilleto, III, 9. *Charitas* is, of course, a misprint for *Charites*.

book, the author again linked his name with Pitt's, in "A Dedication to a Great Man", saying prettily, in allusion to the statesman's recent elevation to the peerage under the title of Earl of Chatham: "My opinion of Lord * * * * * is neither better nor worse, than it was of Mr. * * * . Honours, like impressions upon coin, may give an ideal and local value to a bit of base metal; but Gold and Silver will pass all the world over without any other recommendation than their own weight." A few chapters on, Sterne gave his parting thrust to Warburton, his old friend and enemy, by expressing the hope that *Tristram Shandy*, now completed, would "swim down the gutter of time" along with *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Divine Legation of Moses*.

A fortnight after publication, Sterne informed Panchaud that the last volume of *Tristram Shandy* was liked the best of all by his friends, and requested him, giving thereby an index of brisk sale, to remit a hundred louis to his wife at Marseilles. The conclusion of my uncle Toby's amours, we can well understand, with its nice approaches to forbidden ground, though never quite reaching there, hit exactly the tone of society for which the book was written. To their heart's content, author and reader moved together in these pages, to use Coleridge's expression, through a sort of moral twilight, which is neither light nor darkness. But by the outside public, whose hearts had been corrected by Yorick's sermons and the death of Le Fever, Sterne was reprobated in no uncertain language, save for thankfulness that my uncle Toby had been brought through a severe ordeal, unharmed by the wiles of Mrs. Wadman. "Censor", for example, charged Sterne, in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for March 11-13, with exhausting the salacious wit of England, France, and Spain ("where he has been to recruit"), and with now ransacking "poor old antiquity" as the only storehouse left for him. "Surely", concluded Censor, "our Spiritual Rulers must frown at these things." Likewise appeared in the *Public Ledger* of March 30, a communication from "Davus", calling upon the Church to intervene. After reading the last article, a group of strangers actually prepared and sent to the Archbishop of York a long letter leading up to a hint

that Sterne be unfrocked. The anonymous letter, dated March 30, 1767, and signed by "several", began and closed as follows:

"Several well wishers to your Grace, and to religion and the cause of virtue, modesty, and decency, think it a duty incumbent on them, consistently with that regard they have for them, as well as order and right conduct, to refer your Grace to a letter, signed *Davus*, in the '*Public Ledger*' of *this day*, very justly, as they humbly think, animadverting on the scandal they have long taken and oftener conceived at the works of 'Tristram Shandy', as written by a *clergyman* and a *dignified* one, uncensured by his superiors. They harbour no malice or private peek against him, having no personal knowledge of him or view by this; but are moved merely by indignation on seeing the above letter. * * * No conduct * * * surely more deserves a censure. But whether private or public, your Grace is best judge of. The former probably has been bestowed in vain, and the latter may have a bad effect, by increasing curiosity; yet, perhaps somewhat more than frowns or contempt should be done, that such scandal should no longer exist, or religion and the clergy will be no gainers by it."

The letter was duly received by Archbishop Drummond, who found nothing to censure, so far as we know, in the conduct of Sterne, always a most welcome visitor at Bishopthorpe. The old charge of impropriety which was urged by the anonymous correspondents, had grown stale with the monthly critics, who were now inclined to accept Sterne in the character of Harlequin or the English Rabelais. "We wish", said the *Critical Review* of the last volume in February, "that it had been a little better accommodated to the ear of innocence, *virginibus puerisque*; but, perhaps, of all the authors who have existed since the days of Rabelais, none can with more justice than Tristram put his arms a-kimbo, strut through his room and say, 'None but myself can be my parallel.' " The pages which Sterne left blank were also thought diverting. The author had played with this jest before, but in a different manner. According to the earlier device, the reader was invited to fill in the blank pages with

whatever he might wish in the way of narrative and comment; while in this case Sterne affected to be unable to compose, when he came to them, the most interesting parts of my uncle Toby's courtship; and so they were deferred until he should be in the mood for them. At length he returned to the missing chapters, and thus succeeded in the feat of writing a book backwards.

Exclusive of my uncle Toby, the volume contained two or three pieces of eloquence that arrested the attention of all who read. Jenny, who had appeared in the first instalment seven years before, as a slight and uncertain shadow of Miss Fourmantelle, reappeared for an apostrophe to time, which brings all things to an end. Commonplace as the thought is, Sterne, who felt the nearness of death, lifted it into the realm of poetic beauty. "Every letter I trace tells me", he concluded, "with what rapidity Life follows my pen; the days and hours of it, more precious, my dear *Jenny!* than the rubies about thy neck, are flying over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more——every thing presses on——whilst thou art twisting that lock,——see! it grows grey; and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make.——Heaven have mercy upon us both!" Then there was that invocation, unsurpassed outside of Fielding, to the "Gentle Spirit of sweetest humour, who erst did sit upon the easy pen of my beloved Cervantes"; which glided into "They were the sweetest notes I ever heard", and the whole musical episode of the distressed maid of Moulins. These were the purple passages which went far and wide through magazines and newspapers.

The story of Maria, unconnected with all the rest, may be regarded, if we do not press the point too literally, as an advertisement of the *Sentimental Journey*. Though Sterne was in London for pleasure, he was there for business also. The *Sentimental Journey*, which had been in his mind the previous summer, was clearly delayed a year, that he might prepare the way for its publication by talk about it and a preliminary list of subscribers. Nothing could have served

his purpose better, whether the act were premeditated or not, than his slipping into *Tristram Shandy* an episode of his forthcoming travels, in precisely the same manner as he gave the public a taste of Yorick's sermons years before, when he let Trim read one to Dr. Slop. It may take something from the dignity of literature to imagine Sterne availing himself of the Duke of York's entertainments or of Mrs. Cornelys's assemblies to recruit his purse, but such was an old custom not quite dead in the days of the third George. So successful was the author in his solicitations that he could write to Panchaud on the thirteenth of February: "I am going to publish a Sentimental Journey through France and Italy—the undertaking is protected and highly encouraged by all our noblesse—'tis subscribed for, at a great rate—'twill be an original—in large quarto—the subscription half a guinea—If you can procure me the honour of a few names of men of science, or fashion, I shall thank you—they will appear in good company, as all the nobility here almost have honoured me with their names." Before the winter was over, Sterne had a vision of a thousand guineas from his new book.

To judge from the list as it appeared the next year, few were approached who failed to permit Sterne to take down their names, though a letter to Sancho points to some labour over gathering in the scattered half-guineas. After thanking the negro for leaving at his lodgings several subscriptions of the Montagu family, Sterne reminded him that the transaction was only half completed: "You have something to add, Sancho, to what I owe your good-will also on this account, and that is to send me the subscription money, which I find a necessity of dunning my best friends for before I leave town—to avoid the perplexities of both keeping pecuniary accounts (for which I have very slender talents), and collecting them (for which I have neither strength of body or mind) and so, good Sancho, dun the Duke of Montagu, the Duchess of Montagu, and Lord Montagu for their subscriptions, and lay the sin, and money with it too, at my door."

CHAPTER XIX

THE JOURNAL TO ELIZA

MARCH—OCTOBER 1767

IN the Anglo-Indian society which gathered round the Jameses, Sterne met the Eliza of the *Sentimental Journey*, the one great passion of his life, shining through a decade of flirtations. At first sight, Eliza appeared to him as a rather plain young woman who affected the air and simper of fine ladies bent upon conquest; but the story of her misfortunes, as he heard it from Mrs. James, awakened his compassion; he began to study her face and eyes under more favourable conditions, much as my uncle Toby did the widow Wadman's; and then all was over with Yorick's poor, weak heart. "Not Swift", he was soon writing to her, "so loved his Stella, Scarron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa, as I will love and sing thee, my wife elect! All those names, eminent as they are, shall give place to thine, Eliza."

The woman whom Sterne placed among the famous presences which poets and men of letters have felt in their work was Elizabeth, wife of Daniel Draper, who since his youth had held various appointments in the service of the East India Company. She belonged to the Sclaters originally of Slaughter, in Gloucestershire, where they had been lords of the manor for three centuries.* From various branches of the family which took root in the neighbouring shires and in northern England, came a line of Oxford and Cambridge men distinguished as scholars and divines. The head of the family is now Lord Basing of Hoddington, near Odiham in Hampshire, whose father, George Sclater-Booth, the politician, was elevated to the peerage on his succession to the

* The story of Mrs. Draper's early life and of her family is based upon her letters and other unpublished material now at Hoddington, eked out by accessible genealogies like Burke's *Peerage*.

Hampshire estates. Going back to the eighteenth century, Christopher Selater, Vicar of Loughton and Chingford by Epping Forest, married Elizabeth, daughter of John May, Esq., of Worting, Hants. Of their thirteen children, the fifth son, May Selater, born October 29, 1719, became the father of Sterne's Eliza. When a young man, May Selater went out to India, where he married a Miss Whitehill, whose father and uncle were likewise in the India service. Of the marriage were born three daughters while the family was living on the Malabar Coast, at Anjengo and other factories of the East India Company,—Elizabeth, who gave as her birthday October 5, 1744, and her younger sisters, Mary and Louisa. After growing into girlhood among the Malabars, of whom Elizabeth became very fond, the children were all sent to England for their education under the protection of the Selaters. Their mother seems to have died when they were very young, and the father perhaps saw none of them out of their teens. While in England, Elizabeth apparently stayed much in London with her aunt Elizabeth, a prim woman, married to Dr. Thomas Pickering, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, a kindly humourist, who appreciated the girl's smartness. But she liked best her cousins Tom and Bess, the children of her uncle Richard of Hoddington, the present seat of the family. Between her and Tom existed, so her letters read, rather more than cousinly affection. "All my kin's folk", she wrote to him after the mistake of her marriage, "are in comparison of thee, as trifling * * * as my little finger in comparison to my two bright eyes."

The girl, already vain, I fancy, of her bright eyes and round face, was placed in some school for the "frivolous education" accorded to "girls destined for India". "The generality of us", she said in sorrowful retrospect, "* * * were never instructed in the importance of any thing, but one worldly point, that of getting an establishment of the lucrative kind, as soon as possible, a tolerable complection, an easy manner, some degree of taste in the adjustment of our ornaments, some little skill in dancing a minuet, and singing an air." Having received no training in "useful employments", she returned, in the autumn of 1757, to India,

from which she had been away long enough to be struck by novel sights and customs. Her father was then settled at Bombay, in the best house of the city, "where a great deal of company", she wrote, "comes every day after dinner". Among these guests was Daniel Draper, a promising official of the East India Company, to whom she was married on the twenty-eighth of the following July, when not yet fourteen years old. Her husband, her elder by full twenty years, was near akin, brother or cousin, to Sir William Draper, who captured Manila and otherwise distinguished himself in the East. The year after her marriage, Daniel Draper was appointed Secretary to the Government at Bombay, where he was stationed mostly, save for short intervals at Surat and Tellicherry, during the rest of his life in India. His faithful services were eventually rewarded by a seat in the Council and the post of Accountant General. If a somewhat heavy official, he was described by a friend and admirer as "a very mild and good-humoured man".* There was nothing unusual about the Draper marriage, which now seems so ill-sorted in respect to age; and we may suppose that neither husband nor wife found it too uncomfortable. A son was born in 1759, and two years afterwards a daughter named for her mother—the Eliza or Betsey of several tender letters. In 1765, the Drapers brought their children to England that they might be given an English education. After travelling about for several months in visits to their relatives and to various watering-places as far north as Scarborough, Draper went back to Bombay, leaving his wife in England to see the children established in school and to recover her health, which had been weakened by child-bearing and the heats of India.

The children were fixed in school at Salt Hill with or near an aunt on her mother's side, while Mrs. Draper moved about pleasantly among the Sclaters and Whitehills, still having most regard for Tom, now Thomas Mathew Sclater, heir to Hoddington. As the intimate friend of Mrs. James, she made a wide circle of friends, which included, besides the Anglo-Indians coming and going, families like the Nunehams

* David Price, *Memoirs* * * * of a Field Officer of the Indian Army, 61 (London, 1831).

of Nuneham Hall, Oxford, among whom she was known, because of her beauty and free attractive manners, as the *belle Indian*. Everybody in the intimacy of the James household—Lord Ossory as well as John Dillon, Esq.—seems to have liked and flattered her; one admirer telling her that she ought to go on the stage, and another that her forte was literature. To say truth, her conversation, if we may judge from her letters, readily caught the accent of sentimental society. Although a mere girl, she had read widely in the poets and essayists of the Queen Anne period; she quoted her authors aptly, and quickly developed under Sterne's influence into a Blue-Stocking.

The first meeting between Sterne and Mrs. Draper took place soon after the author reached London in January, 1767; if we may imagine it so, at one of the Sunday dinners in Gerrard Street. Advances beyond casual acquaintance were made by Sterne a fortnight or so later, when he sent Mrs. Draper a full set of his works accompanied by the following letter:

“Eliza will receive my books with this.—The sermons came all hot from the heart.—I wish that I could give them any title to be offered to yours.—The others came from the head—I am more indifferent about their reception.—

“I know not how it comes about, but I'm half in love with you—I ought to be *wholly so*—for I never valued (or saw more good qualities to value) or thought more of one of your sex than of you; so adieu. Yours faithfully, if not affectionately, L. Sterne.”

Mrs. Draper, honoured by the attentions of an author whom all the polite world was courting, met her admirer half way. In return for the familiar Eliza, she was soon referring to him as Yorick, “the mild, generous, and good”, or calling him by a pretty fancy her Bramin, the source of all wisdom. The new title, lifting him into the spiritual caste of India, pleased Sterne, who repaid the compliment by addressing Eliza as his Bramine, or counterpart in the knowledge of the heart. With no thought of concealing their sentimental attachment as it grew apace, Mrs. Draper sent a copy of Sterne's letter to her cousin Tom, and Sterne wrote to his

daughter Lydia of his "dear friend". They visited places of amusement together or with Mrs. James, dined *tête-à-tête* at Sterne's lodgings in Bond Street, and made excursions to Salt Hill and Enfield Wash to visit the Draper children. Every morning there passed between them letters arranging for the disposal of their day or announcing the peremptory call of other engagements. Wherever Sterne went to dine, Mrs. Draper was "the star that conducted and enliven'd the discourse". At Lord Bathurst's, says one of Sterne's letters, "I talked of thee an hour without intermission with so much pleasure and attention, that the good old Lord toasted your health three different times; and now he is in his eighty-fifth year, says he hopes to live long enough to be introduced as a friend to my fair Indian disciple, and to see her eclipse all other nabobesses as much in wealth, as she does already in exterior and (what is far better) in interior merit.—I hope so too. This nobleman is an old friend of mine.—You know he was always the protector of men of wit and genius; and has had those of the last century, Addison, Steele, Pope, Swift, Prior, &c. &c. always at his table." On these occasions Sterne sometimes took along a letter or two of Eliza's, from which he read scraps to his more intimate friends, who, like himself, found the style "new" and the sentiments "very good and very elegantly expressed". "Who taught you", asked the flatterer, "the art of writing so sweetly, Eliza?—You have absolutely exalted it to a science!" For further inspiration, he gave Mrs. Draper his portrait, which she placed over her writing-desk; and in return she sat for him, it would seem, to Cosway, the famous miniaturist. The little portrait of Mrs. Draper, apparently a miniature, in which she appeared simply dressed as a vestal, without her usual adornments of "silks, pearls, and ermines", Sterne showed to half the town, and communed with it alone in the quiet of Bond Street, whence he wrote to Mrs. Draper on a morning when at the height of his infatuation: "Your eyes and the shape of your face (the latter the most perfect oval I ever saw) * * * are equal to any of God's works in a similar way, and finer than any I beheld in all my travels."

While Sterne was thus cantering up and down deliciously

with his passion, Mrs. Draper was suddenly prostrated by a letter from her husband asking for her immediate return to India. The news of her illness came as a shock to Sterne on a February morning when, on making his usual call, he was told by the house-maid that Mrs. Draper was not well enough to receive him. After passing a sleepless night, he despatched a note in remonstrance the next day, saying in part: "Remember, my dear, that a friend has the same right as a physician. The etiquettes of this town (you'll say) say otherwise.—No matter! Delicacy and propriety do not always consist in observing their frigid doctrines." For six weeks thereafter, the frigid doctrines of the town being neglected, Sterne watched Mrs. Draper through her illness and convalescence, so fearful at times of the issue that he prepared an elegy upon her in case it should be needed. "She has a tender frame", he wrote to Lydia, copying out the verses, "and looks like a drooping lily, for the roses are fled from her cheeks—I can never see or talk to this incomparable woman without bursting into tears—I have a thousand obligations to her, and I owe her more than her whole sex, if not all the world put together—She has a delicacy in her way of thinking that few possess—our conversations are of the most interesting nature, and she talks to me of quitting this world with more composure than others think of living in it.—I have wrote an epitaph, of which I send thee a copy.—'Tis expressive of her modest worth—but may heav'n restore her! and may she live to write mine.

'Columns, and labour'd urns but vainly shew
An idle scene of decorated woe.
The sweet companion, and the friend sincere,
Need no mechanic help to force the tear.

'In heart-felt numbers, never meant to shine
'Twill flow eternal o'er a hearse like thine;
'Twill flow, whilst gentle goodness has one friend,
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.' "

Mrs. Draper's other friends likewise sympathised keenly with the distress of a young woman who must leave her chil-

dren and go back to a husband for whom she had no affection, and to a dull life which offered no scope for her talents. In short, nothing but the duty of the wife to her husband under the law called her oversea to India. Her father, it must be inferred from the silence of her letters at this period, had been dead for several years; and in the career of her favourite sister, the unhappy woman read her own fate. Mary, or Polly as the family called her, was like Mrs. Draper a girl of gay and lively spirits, who jested with her uncle Thomas while lighting his pipe for him in the seclusion of St. Sepulchre's. After the usual trivial education, she also returned to India, to become the wife of Rawson Hart Boddam of Bombay. For two years she bore up against the enervating climate and childbirth until she became a shadow of her former self, and then died under most melancholy circumstances. Of all Mrs. Draper's friends, none—except an unnamed family, perhaps the Pickerings—was disposed to criticise her reluctance to run the risks of India in her present condition; and yet none could quite venture the advice that she disobey her husband. At the last moment, however, when Mrs. Draper again fell ill, Sterne went so far as to say: "Put off all thoughts of returning to India this year.—Write to your husband—tell him the truth of your case.—If he is the generous, humane man you describe him to be, he cannot but applaud your conduct." If the expense of another year in England would be troublesome, he declared in an exalted mood of generosity, that he stood ready to subscribe his whole subsistence, and then sequester his livings, if necessary, rather than see such "a creature * * * sacrificed for the paltry consideration of a few hundreds". Should Mrs. Draper wish it, his wife and daughter might be summoned over to take her with them to the south of France, where he himself could join them for a winter in Florence and Naples.

However sincere Sterne's proposals may have been, they were clearly impracticable. Though his attachment to Mrs. Draper may have caused, except in the case of one nameless family, no adverse comment among those who understood the relation between them, it was yet quite impossible for Sterne

to take under the protection of his purse another man's wife. Such a course would not have been tolerated by public opinion, lenient as it was outside of a few strict conventions. So it was settled that Mrs. Draper should sail for India on the *Earl of Chatham*, which was expected to leave Deal, weather permitting, early in April. In the meantime little presents passed between Mrs. Draper and her friends. For Mrs. James and the Nunehams, as well as for Sterne, she had her portrait painted in the dress and attitude each most admired. Besides the "sweet sentimental picture" left with Sterne, she presented him with "a gold stock buccle and buttons", which he rated above rubies, because they had been fitted to him by the hand of friendship and thereby consecrated forever. At last came the farewell visit to the children, whom Mrs. Whitehill generously offered to take under her personal charge. "God preserve the poor babies", wrote Mrs. Draper, "and may they live to give satisfaction to their parents—and reflect honour on their amiable protectress!"

In order to make the necessary preparation for a long voyage, Mrs. Draper took post-chaise for Deal some ten days in advance of the probable sailing, in company with a Miss Light, who was going out to Madras to marry George Stratton, a councillor of the East India Company. Sterne, as he records the parting scene, handed Mrs. Draper into the chaise and then turned away to his lodgings in anguish of spirit, never to see his friend again, unless perchance he made a visit to the seaport the next week with the Jameses. For a day or two he lay ill of another hemorrhage, during the fever of which he fancied that Mrs. Draper returned just as he was dying, clasped him by the knees, and raising her "fine eyes", bade him be of comfort. None the less for his weakness, he sent Mrs. Draper every morning a letter directing her movements as if present and arranging from a distance many little details of her cabin. A pianoforte which she took along with her to Deal, proving to be, as soon as set up, out of tune, Sterne purchased for her a hammer and pliers, and told her to tune the instrument from her guitar that it might again vibrate sweet comfort to their hopes. "I have

bought you'', says the letter further, ''ten handsome brass screws, to hang your necessities upon: I purchased twelve; but stole a couple from you to put up in my own cabin, at Coxwould—I shall never hang, or take my hat off one of them, but I shall think of you. * * * I have written, also, to Mr. Abraham Walker, pilot at Deal, that I had dispatched these in a packet, directed to his care; which I desired he would seek after, the moment the Deal machine arrived. I have, moreover, given him directions, what sort of an arm-chair you would want, and have directed him to purchase the best that Deal could afford, and take it, with the parcel, in the first boat that went off. Would I could, Eliza, so supply all thy wants, and all thy wishes.'' With these and similar tokens of friendship went much advice as to Mrs. Draper's conduct on shipboard, which, though variously phrased, was always pitched to the following key: ''Be cautious * * * my dear, of intimacies. Good hearts are open, and fall naturally into them. Heaven inspire thine with fortitude, in this, and every deadly trial! Best of God's works, farewell! Love me, I beseech thee; and remember me for ever! * * * Adieu, adieu! and with my adieu—let me give thee one streight rule of conduct, that thou hast heard from my lips in a thousand forms—but I concenter it in one word, Reverence Thyself. * * * Blessings, rest, and Hygeia go with thee! May'st thou soon return, in peace and affluence, to illumine my night! I am, and shall be, the last to deplore thy loss, and will be the first to congratulate and hail thy return.''

The *Earl of Chatham*, with other outbound ships, set sail from Deal on Wednesday, April 3, 1767, under a brisk north-east wind which bore them quickly through the Channel.* At the point of departure, it was Mrs. Draper's hope that her husband would soon retire from the service, or at least permit his wife to revisit her friends and children in the course of a year or two. There were times also when Sterne encouraged her imagination to play with more distant contingencies, as in a curious summary of their attachment

* *Lloyd's Evening Post*, April 3-6.

which he wrote out for her a few weeks later anent references to their passion in the *Sentimental Journey*:

“I have brought”, he said in a sketch which was to be submitted for her approval before it should be entrusted to posterity, “I have brought your name *Eliza!* and Picture into my work—where they will remain—when you and I are at rest forever—Some annotator or explainer of my works in this place will take occasion, to speak of the Friendship which subsisted so long and faithfully betwixt Yorick and the Lady he speaks of—Her Name he will tell the world was Draper—a Native of India—married there to a gentleman in the India Service of that Name—who brought her over to England for the recovery of her health in the year ’65—where she continued to April the year 1767. It was about three months before her Return to India, That our Author’s acquaintance and hers began. Mrs. Draper had a great thirst for knowledge—was handsome—genteel—engaging—and of such gentle dispositions and so enlighten’d an understanding,—That Yorick (whether he made much opposition is not known) from an acquaintance—soon became her Admirer—they caught fire, at each other at the same time—and they would often say, without reserve to the world, and without any Idea of saying wrong in it, That their affections for each other were *unbounded*—Mr. Draper dying in the year * * * * * this Lady return’d to England, and Yorick the year after becoming a Widower—they were married—and retiring to one of his Livings in Yorkshire, where was a most romantic Situation—they lived and died happily—and are spoke of with honour in the parish to this day.”

II

Just before their separation, Sterne and Mrs. Draper spent a Saturday evening together in London, when or at another time it was agreed that each should keep an intimate journal in order that they might have “mutual testimonies to deliver hereafter to each other” on the glad day of their reunion. While Mrs. Draper was at Deal making ready for

her voyage to India, Sterne sent her all that he had written; and on the thirteenth of April he forwarded by a Mr. Watts, then departing for Bombay, a second instalment of his record. These two sections of Sterne's journal—and likewise all of Mrs. Draper's, for we know that she kept one—have disappeared. The extant part begins on the thirteenth of April, 1767, and comes down to the fourth of August in the same year. The sudden break was occasioned by the expected return of Mrs. Sterne from France, the thought of whose presence, to say nothing of the reality of it, the author felt as a restraint upon his fancy. A postscript was added on the first of November announcing that Mrs. Sterne and Lydia, after some weeks with him at Coxwold, had just gone to York for the winter, while he himself was to remain at Shandy Hall to complete the *Sentimental Journey*. There were hints that the journal would be resumed as soon as the author reached town in the following January. But Sterne probably did not carry out his intention. At least nothing is known of a later effort.

And what we have of the journal has lain until recently in hidden places. Sterne doubtless took the manuscript, as he thought of doing, with him to London in the winter of 1767-68, where, we may fancy, it was discovered among his papers after death and turned over to the Jameses. Favouring this surmise is the fact that when the journal came to light, it was in the company of two letters from Sterne to these friends, an unfinished scrawl from him to Eliza's husband, and a long "ship letter", amounting almost to an autobiography, from Mrs. Draper to Mrs. James. All these manuscripts drifted into the library of a Mr. Gibbs of Bath, and upon his death, to a room set apart by the family for waste papers, old letters, and old commonplace books regarded as of no documentary value whatever. While playing in the room one day and looking about for paper "to cut up into spills to light candles with", Mr. Gibbs's son Tom, a boy of eleven, popped upon the names of Yorick and Eliza, which he had seen before, and pulled out the journal and letters as too good for candle lighters. Sterne's letters may not be exactly adapted to the perusal of children, but had not this boy—

Thomas Washbourne Gibbs—known his Sterne, the world would have lost a most illuminating document. Hearing in May 1751 that Thackeray was to include Sterne among his *English Humourists*, the second Mr. Gibbs sent the curious journal and other pieces up to the novelist for use in his famous portrait of Yorick. It is rather strange that Thackeray, though he thanked Mr. Gibbs for the courtesy, then made no reference to the journal in his lecture on Sterne and Goldsmith, but reserved his private information for a terrific assault upon Sterne in a *Roundabout* several years later. Except for Thackeray's mere mention of the journal which had been lent him by "a gentleman of Bath" (the passage was afterwards suppressed*), nothing was publicly known concerning the manuscripts until March, 1878, when Mr. Gibbs read before the Bath Literary Institution a paper on "Some Memorials of Laurence Sterne," the substance of which was printed in *The Athenæum* for March 30, 1878. On the death of Mr. Gibbs in 1894, the manuscripts passed under his bequest to the British Museum. The journal covers, besides an introductory note and a lone entry at the end, seventy-six pages of writing with about twenty-eight lines to the page, all in Sterne's own hand. The leaves are folio in size, and except in the case of the first and the last, both sides are written upon. As if designed for publication, the manuscript contains numerous blots and interlineations for better phrases, in addition to the introductory note, which was clearly framed to mystify the general reader, who in those days took pleasure in a preface like the following:

"This Journal wrote under the fictitious names of Yorick and Draper—and sometimes of the Bramin and Bramine—but 'tis a Diary of the miserable feelings of a person separated from a Lady for whose Society he languish'd—The real Names—are foreigne—and the account a copy from a French Manuscript,—in Mr. S——'s hands—but wrote as it is, to cast a Viel [*sic*] over them—There is a Counterpart—which is the Lady's account [of] what transactions

* For the original passage, see "A Roundabout Journey: Notes of a Week's Holiday" (*Cornhill Magazine*, November, 1860). Two letters from Thackeray to Gibbs are preserved with the *Gibbs MSS.* at the British Museum (*Additional MSS.*, 34527).

daily happened—and what Sentiments occupied her mind, during this Separation from her admirer—these are worth reading—the translator cannot say so much in favour of Yorick's which seem to have little merit beyond their honesty and truth."

To vary Sterne's phrasing, the *Journal to Eliza* (as we may style the document with Swift's *Journal to Stella* in memory) is a record of personal incidents accompanied by the sensations and fancies that arose out of them day by day, sometimes hour by hour, in a mind losing its poise under the subtle influences of passion and disease. It is the emotional history lying behind and thus explaining in a measure the style, tone, and mood of the *Sentimental Journey*, of which the author regarded Mrs. Draper as the main inspiration. "Were your husband in England", he wrote to her at Deal while gazing at her portrait, "I would freely give him five hundred pounds (if money could purchase the acquisition), to let you only sit by me two hours in a day, while I wrote my *Sentimental Journey*. I am sure the work would sell so much the better for it, that I should be reimbursed the sum more than seven times told." In order to keep her image before him through the next months, he purchased charts and maps whereby he might follow her ship every day, wondering where she was and what she was doing; and when tired of this, he fell to imagining that she was still by him, talking to him, and overlooking his work. "I have you more in my mind than ever", he wrote long weeks afterwards, "and in proportion as I am thus torn from your embraces—I cling the closer to the Idea of you. Your Figure is ever before my eyes—the sound of your voice vibrates with its sweetest tones the live long day in my ear—I can see and hear nothing but my Eliza."

The first pages of the journal are taken up with details of an illness which threatened to put an end to Sterne's life. Already "worn out both in body and mind" by a long stretch of dinners, Sterne completely broke down under the strain of Mrs. Draper's departure for India. "Poor sick-headed, sick-hearted Yorick!" he exclaims, "Eliza has made a shadow of thee! * * * how I shall rally my powers alarms me."

Recovering sufficiently from his first hemorrhage to go about, he imprudently dined with Hall-Stevenson at the Brawn's Head on the twelfth of April and supped at the Demoniac's lodgings in the evening with "the whole Pandemonium assembled". For this indulgence he "paid a severe reckoning all the night", and "got up tottering and feeble" in the morning, resolved to dedicate the day (which was Sunday) "to Abstinence and reflection". At night came on a fever which kept him in for two days more, during which he read over and over again Mrs. Draper's letters, filing them away; and dosed himself with Dr. James's Powder, a popular remedy of the period, which, so said the advertisements, would allay "any acute fever in a few hours though attended by convulsions". This nostrum, which Madame Pompadour took in her last illness and which was destined to kill poor Goldsmith a few years later, working differently upon Sterne, brought him to his feet for a day or two, so that he was able to set up his carriage in preparation for the journey home in a style suitable to his dignity.

It was, however, very dangerous, as Sterne discovered, to go out immediately after taking a concoction so strongly diaphoretic in its action as was the mysterious powder. While trying his horses in the park—described as an "exceeding good" pair when they were sold the next year—he caught a severe cold, which sent him to bed "in the most acute pain". To satisfy his friends, he summoned two able members of the faculty—a physician and a surgeon—with whom there was a lively contention when the sick man learned their diagnosis of his case and the kind of treatment that it involved:

"We will not reason about it, said the Physician, but you must undergo a course of Mercury.—I'll lose my life first, said I—and trust to Nature, to Time—or at the worst—to Death.—So I put an end with some Indignation to the Conference. * * * Now as the father of mischief would have it, who has no pleasure like that of dishonouring the righteous—it so fell out, That from the moment I dismiss'd my Doctors—my pains began to rage with a violence not to be express'd, or supported—every hour became more intol-

lerable—I was got to bed—cried out and raved the whole night—and was got up so near dead, That my friends insisted upon my sending again for my Physician and Surgeon. —I told them upon the word of a man of Strict honour, They were both mistaken as to my case—but tho' they had reason'd wrong—they might act right."

Thus brought to bay by sharp suffering, Sterne at once parted with twelve ounces of blood under the lancet of the eminent surgeon in order to quiet what was left in him. The next day the two gentlemen reappeared with a demand for more of Yorick's thin blood; and after their second visit his arm broke loose from their bandage, with the result that he nearly bled to death during the night before he was aware of the accident. All nourishment, including his four o'clock dish of tea, was denied him, with the exception of water-gruel, which he abhorred worse than the ass's milk he had drunk on former occasions. This lowering treatment, which, like the method practised by the famous Dr. Sangrado upon Spanish ecclesiastics, sought to displace the patient's blood with water, reduced Sterne to so great weakness that he momentarily feared that the breath which he was drawing would be the last for which he had strength. "I'm going", he wrote on a morning as he gasped out a farewell to Eliza, "I'm going——"; but he was able to add as the day wore on, "Am a little better——so shall not depart as I apprehended." In spite of the prohibition, he managed to have, through the kindness of Molly the house-maid, his afternoon tea and soon his boiled fowl and "dish of macaruls", whereby he improved so rapidly that a week later "my Doctors", says the journal, "stroked their beards, and look'd ten per cent wiser upon feeling my pulse, and enquiring after my Symptoms". As their final prescription, they insisted upon thrusting down his throat Van Swieten's Corrosive Mercury, as if they were bent upon sublimating him to "an ethereal substance". His doctors finally dismissed, he experimented on his own account with a French tincture called *L'Extrait de Saturne*, and ordered his carriage for a drive about town.

In sickness as in health, Sterne was overwhelmed with attentions. Mrs. James, missing him at her Sunday dinner,

sent her maid to enquire after his health and to bid him preserve a life so valuable to herself and to Eliza. The next day forty people of fashion came to his bedside; and thereafter his room was “always full of friendly Visitors”, and his “rapper eternally going with Cards and enquiries”. “I should be glad”, was his comment, “of the Testimonies——without the Tax.” As soon as he could be helped into his carriage, he visited Mrs. James to thank her for her daily messages and to weep with her over the loss of Mrs. Draper. It was a scene of woe which better than all else lets the reader into the morbid state of the emotions that gave birth to the story of poor Maria in the *Sentimental Journey*:

“Tears ran down her cheeks”, wrote Sterne after the ordeal with Mrs. James was over, “when she saw how pale and wan I was——never gentle creature sympathized more tenderly——I beseech you, cried the good Soul, not to regard either difficulties or expences, but fly to Eliza directly——I see you will dye without her——save yourself for her——how shall I look her in the face? What can I say to her, when on her return I have to tell her, That her Yorick is no more!——Tell her my dear friend, said I, That I will meet her in a better world——and that I have left this, because I could not live without her; tell Eliza, my dear friend, added I——That I died broken hearted—and that you were a Witness to it.——As I said this, she burst into the most pathetick flood of tears—that ever kindly Nature shed. You never beheld so affecting a Scene——’twas too much for Nature! Oh! she is good—I love her as my Sister!——and could Eliza have been a witness, hers would have melted down to Death and scarce have been brought back, an Extacy so celestial and savouring of another world.——I had like to have fainted, and to that Degree was my heart and soul affected, it was with difficulty I could reach the street door; I have got home, and shall lay all day upon my Sopha—and to morrow morning my dear Girl write again to thee; for I have not strength to drag my pen.”

Three weeks were still necessary before Sterne felt strong enough to venture on the journey homewards. During the period of convalescence, with its frequent relapses from over-

exertion, he occasionally dined with a friend or sat for an hour or two at Ranelagh, or drove on a morning through Hyde Park, where he encountered one day, as amusingly related in the journal, a former passion who was taking the air on horseback. In their flirtation, the unknown woman whom Mrs. Draper had supplanted in Yorick's affections, had figured fancifully as the Queen of Sheba who once came to Jerusalem with camels, spices, and gold, to prove the wisdom of Solomon. Of the modern Sheba and Solomon, says the journal:

"Got out into the park to day—Sheba there on Horseback; pass'd twice by her without knowing her—she stop'd the third time—to ask me how I did—I would not have ask'd you, Solomon! said she, but your Looks affected me for you'r half dead I fear—I thank'd Sheba very kindly, but without any emotion but what sprung from gratitude—Love alas! was fled with thee Eliza!—I did not think Sheba could have changed so much in grace and beauty—Thou hadst shrunk poor Sheba away into Nothing, but a good natured girl, without powers or charms—I *fear* your wife is dead; quoth Sheba.—No, you don't *fear* it Sheba, said I, —Upon my word Solomon! I would quarrel with you, was you not so ill—If you knew the cause of my Illness, Sheba, replied I, you would quarrel but the more with me—You lie, Solomon! answered Sheba, for I know the Cause already—and am so little out of Charity with you upon it—That I give you leave to come and drink Tea with me before you leave Town, * * * and so canter'd away."

Whether Sheba and Solomon enjoyed a dish of tea together before the latter left town, our narrative does not relate; but the visit was unlikely, for Sterne's last week in London was occupied with formal leave-takings among friends in higher station. To John Dillon, Esq., the "gentlest and best of souls", was sent a pretty note congratulating him on his successful suit for the hand of a "fair Indian", some friend of Eliza's, while himself must "go bootless home"; and to Mrs. Draper he wrote under the stimulant of the *Extraite de Saturne* a long letter, which was to go overland by way of Aleppo and Bussorah, that it might await her on

her arrival in India. During his illness had come an anxious enquiry from the Earl of Shelburne, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was recruiting at Bath after the labours and levees of a hard season. In return Sterne thanked him for “numberless and unmerited civilities”, and recast for his lordship’s entertainment the whimsical account given in the journal of his troubles with the doctors. Finally, he attended Court on his last Sunday in town, and accepted invitations for large dinner parties from “seven or eight grandes”, among whom was Lord Spencer, who presented him on the evening before his departure with “a grand Ecritoire of forty guineas”.

The last glimpse of Sterne in London this year occurs under date of Friday morning, the twenty-second of May, as he sat in his lodgings hurriedly scrawling off replies to farewell messages which awaited him on his return from Lord Spencer’s, while his chaise and horses stood outside ready to bear his “poor body to its legal settlement”. “I am ill, very ill”, he wrote at parting, “I languish most affectingly—I am sick both soul and body.” Owing to his extreme weakness, nearly seven days were required for a journey which travellers usually performed in two or three. Completely exhausted by the time he drove into Newark on Saturday evening, he was compelled to remain over Sunday, whence was despatched, before setting forward, the following characteristic note to Hall-Stevenson, descriptive of his fatigues and his miserable condition on the road thus far:

“Newark, Monday, ten o’clock in the morn.

“My Dear Cousin,—I have got conveyed thus far like a bale of cadaverous goods consigned to Pluto and company—lying in the bottom of my chaise most of the route, upon a large pillow which I had the *prevoyance* to purchase before I set out—I am worn out—but press on to Barnby Moor to night, and if possible to York the next.—I know not what is the matter with me—but some *derangement* presses hard upon this machine—still I think it will not be upset this bout.—My love to Gilbert. We shall all meet from the east, and from the south, and (as at the last) be happy

together—My kind respects to a few.—I am, dear Hall, truly yours, L. Sterne.”

Too ill to reach York on Tuesday, Sterne was forced to halt at Doncaster, where he passed two nights with the Archbishop of York, who was then staying at his house near the town. This was the first meeting between Sterne and Dr. Drummond since the anonymous letter from London asking that the profane parson be unfrocked. If any mention was made of the incident, it passed off in jest, for each was devoted to the other. “This good prelate”, Sterne remarked in the journal, “who is one of our most refined Wits and the most of a gentleman of our order—oppresses me with his kindness—he shews in his treatment of me, what he told me upon taking my Leave—that he loves me, and has a high Value for me—his Chaplains tell me, he is perpetually talking of me and has such an opinion of my head and heart that he begs to stand Godfather for my next Literary production.” Without any reserves, Sterne showed the archbishop, his lady, and sister the portrait of Eliza, and related the story of his friendship with the original. Becoming a little stronger by Thursday, he drove through to Coxwold that day and went directly to bed on Van Swieten’s Corrosive Mercury. Only rest, temperance, and good hours, it proved, were needed to reinstate Sterne in his usual health and spirits. At the end of three weeks, he cast to the dogs the medicines which were tearing his frame to pieces, began to drink ass’s milk, and concluded that he would not descend to Pluto for a year at least or, on a nearer reckoning as it turned out, until he had trailed his pen through the *Sentimental Journey*.

There were days when he felt as well as at any time since leaving college and when he looked forward to a summons from Mrs. Draper to meet her in the Downs and bring her home as his wife. In the meantime, whether for one or for five years, he would enjoy himself to the full, accepting, with resignation, health and sickness like the periodical returns of light and darkness. It is altogether a delightful picture which we have of Sterne as he settled into this mood for his

summer's task, varied by excursions with his friends. "I am in the Vale of Coxwoud", he wrote in his journal to Eliza when summer was advancing, and similarly in a letter to his friend Arthur Lee, "and wish you saw in how princely a manner I live in it——'tis a Land of Plenty——I sit down alone to Venison, fish or wild fowl—or a couple of fowls—with curds, and strawberrys and cream, (and all the simple clean plenty which a rich Valley can produce,——with a Bottle of wine on my right hand (as in Bond street) to drink your health——I have a hundred hens and chickens about my yard——and not a parishioner catches a hare, a rabbit or a Trout—but he brings it as an offering——In short 'tis a golden Valley—and will be the golden Age when you govern the rural feast, my Bramine."

Anticipating the golden age, Sterne rearranged and re-decorated Shandy Hall—more in fancy, perhaps, than in fact—that it might become a fit habitation for its mistress. "I have this week finished", records the journal only ten days after Sterne's arrival, "a sweet little apartment which all the time it was doing, I flatter'd the most delicious of Ideas, in thinking I was making it for you——'Tis a neat little simple elegant room, overlook'd only by the Sun—just big enough to hold a Sopha; for us—a Table, four Chairs, a Bureau, and a Book case.——They are to be all yours, Room and all—and there Eliza! shall I enter ten times a day to give thee Testimonies of my Devotion——Was't thou this moment sat down, it would be the sweetest of earthly Tabernacles." "'Tis a little oblong room", the narrative goes on into further details, "with a large Sash at the end—a little elegant fireplace—with as much room to dine around it, as in Bond street——But in sweetness and Simplicity, and silence beyond any thing.——Oh my Eliza!—I shall see thee surely Goddess of this Temple,——and the most sovereign one, of all I have—and of all the powers heaven has trusted me with." Off from the temple—or sitting room, to write plainer English—were to be other rooms dedicated to Mrs. Draper, adds the journal later in the season, saying: "I * * * am projecting a good Bed-chamber adjoining it, with a pretty dressing room for you, which

connects them together—and when they are finish'd, will be as sweet a set of romantic apartments, as you ever beheld—the Sleeping room will be very large—The dressing room, thro' which you pass into your Temple, will be little—but Big enough to hold a dressing Table—a couple of chairs, with room for your Nymph to stand at her ease both behind and on either side of you—with spare Room to hang a dozen petticoats—gowns, &c—and Shelves for as many Band-boxes."

Mrs. Draper's apartments were to be enriched with many little gifts of Sterne's own devising, besides more costly presents from his friends, which would be placed in due time at her disposal. If she were a good girl, she might hang her cabinet with "six beautiful pictures" which he had just received from Rome of the "Sculptures upon poor Ovid's Tomb, who died in Exile, though he wrote so well upon the Art of Love"; and on her table might rest "a most elegant gold snuff box" valued at forty guineas, which a gentleman—Sir George Macartney, it would seem,—was having fabricated for Sterne at Paris. On the outside was to be an inscription in Sterne's honour, and within the cover a portrait of Eliza. In like manner Sterne adorned his study with numerous trinkets given him by Mrs. Draper as pledges of affection, never forgetting to take her portrait from his neck or pocket and to place it upon the table before him, that he might look into "her gentle sweet face", as he wrote of the fair Fleming, the beautiful grisette, or the heart-broken Maria. There were indeed moments bordering upon hallucination, when Mrs. Draper seemed to enter his study without tapping and quietly take a chair by his side, to overlook his work and talk low to him in counsel for hours together. At length the hallucination would pass, and the figure of Mrs. Draper would fade into a melancholy cat sitting and purring at his side, and looking up gravely into his face as if she understood the situation. "How soothable", remarked Sterne on one of these occasions, "my heart is, Eliza, when such little things sooth it! for in some pathetic sinkings I feel even some support from this poor Cat—I attend to her purrings—and think they harmonize me—they are

pianissimo at least, and do not disturb me.—Poor Yorick! to be driven, with all his sensibilities, to these resources—all powerful Eliza, that had this Magical authority over him, to bend him thus to the dust!”

In one of his pathetic sinkings, Sterne so far lost self-control as to draft a letter (which was probably never sent) to Eliza's husband, hinting at better care of her health and explaining his interest in her. It was evidently a rather difficult exercise in composition, for Yorick begins a sentence, breaks it off, starts in anew, draws pen through word and phrase once more, and finally passes into chaos on arriving at the verge of a proposal that Mrs. Draper be permitted to return to England and live under his platonic protection. As well as can be made out, the curious letter was intended to run somewhat as follows:

“I own it, Sir, that the writing a Letter to a gentleman I have not the honour to be known to—a Letter likewise upon no kind [of] business (in the Ideas of the world) is a little out of the common course of Things—but I'm so myself—and the Impulse which makes me take up my pen is out of the common way too—for [it] arises from the honest pain I should feel in avowing so great esteem and friendship as I do for Mrs. Draper, if I did not wish and hope to extend it to Mr. Draper also. I fell in Love with your Wife—but tis a Love, you would honour me for—for tis so like that I bear my own daughter, who is a good creature, that I scarce distinguish a difference betwixt it—that moment would have been the last of my acquaintance with my friend (all worthy as she is).

“I wish it had been in my power to have been of true use to Mrs. Draper at this Distance from her best Protector—I have bestowed a great deal of pains (or rather I should [say] pleasure) upon her head—her heart needs none—and her head as little as any Daughter of Eve's, and indeed less than any it has been my fate to converse with for some years—God preserve her.—I wish I could make myself of any service to Mrs. D. whilst she is in India—and I in the world—for worldly affairs I could be of none.

“I wish you, dear Sir, many years happiness.—Tis a

part of my Litany to pray to heaven for her health and Life —She is too good to be lost and I would out [of] pure zeal t[ake] a pilgrimage to Mecca to seek a Medicine.”*

Partly breaking from the obsession of Mrs. Draper’s image, Sterne made several excursions during the summer. He was twice at Crazy Castle—a week near the end of June for recuperation, and three or four days midway in July, on a special summons to come over for a large party of “the most brilliant Wits of the Age”, including, said the newspapers, Garrick and Colman the dramatist. While at Skelton, he dined with “Bombay-Lascelles”, an old acquaintance of Mrs. Draper as well as of himself, who, back from India, had taken a house two miles away; and there was “dining and feasting all day” with Mr. Charles Turner of Kirkleatham, than whom none of the Yorkshire gentlemen entertained more lavishly, and none was married to a more beautiful wife. These visits mark the last time that Sterne and his friends were to race chariots along the beach by Saltburn “with one wheel in the sea and the other in the sand”. On taking final leave of Skelton, Hall-Stevenson accompanied him home to Shandy Hall for a few days’ rest preliminary to several short trips together. They passed a whole day at Bishopthorpe with the Archbishop of York, who honoured Sterne with a subscription to the *Sentimental Journey* on imperial paper; then they put off to Harrogate, where they drank the waters through a week at the height of the season, and thence they returned to York for the summer races. At York was delivered to Sterne, two hours after his arrival, as if timed to it, the first news from Mrs. Draper since she sailed from Deal. It was the journal of her voyage, in two long letters, as far as Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands and to some point across the line, where a Dutch ship, returning from India, took aboard the *Earl of Chatham’s* mail. How Sterne’s heart was upset when he broke the “dear packets” alone in his lodgings, may be left to his journal to relate:

“I cannot give vent to all the emotions I felt even before I open’d them—for I knew thy hand—and my seal—which was only in thy possession——O ’tis from my Eliza, said I.

* This letter forms a part of the *Gibbs MSS.*

—I instantly shut the door of my Bed-chamber, and ordered myself to be denied—and spent the whole evening, and till dinner the next day, in reading over and over again the most interesting account—and the most endearing one that ever tried the tenderness of man.—I read and wept—and wept and read till I was blind—then grew sick, and went to bed—and in an hour call'd again for the Candle.
* * * O my Eliza! thou writest to me with an Angel's pen—and thou wouldst win me by thy Letters, had I never seen thy face or known thy heart."

All summer long, letters came in from friends to join them at Scarborough, but he waited until the full season, when he went over as the guest of Dr. Jemmet Brown, Bishop of Cork and Ross. Writing to Mr. and Mrs. James of the visit, Sterne said: "I was ten days at Scarborough in September, and hospitably entertained by one of the best of our Bishops; who, as he kept house there, press'd me to be with him—and his household consisted of a gentleman, and two ladies—which, with the good Bishop and myself, made so good a party that we kept much to ourselves.—I made in this time a connection of great friendship with my mitred host, who would gladly have taken me with him back to Ireland." The two ladies were Lady Anne Dawson and Sterne's old friend, Mrs. Vesey, both of whom were at Scarborough for the restoration of their nerves. They amused themselves by standing on the cliff until they were giddy, as they watched "the poor Bishop floundering and sprawling" in the sea; and in the evening were tea-parties, and excursions in their chaises.* Before the company broke up, the good bishop made Sterne "great offers" if he would settle in Ireland, and requested the honour of marrying him to Mrs. Draper as soon as all obstacles should be removed. With Dr. Brown's offer came another from a friend in the south, who would have Sterne exchange Sutton and Stillington for a parish in Surrey, only thirty miles from London and valued at three hundred and fifty pounds a year. Under the second arrangement, Sterne was to retain,

* *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, edited by Montagu Pennington, III, 320 (London, 1809).

as explained to Mrs. Draper, Coxwold and his prebend; but in his present weakened state of body and mind, he was unable to go through the details of the transfer. "I could get up fast", he wrote for Mrs. Draper, "the hill of preferment, if I chose it—but without thee I feel Lifeless—and if a Mitre was offer'd me, I would not have it, till I could have thee too, to make it sit easy upon my brow."

Mrs. Draper was thus never long absent from Sterne's imagination. Wherever he went, he always took with him his journal, writing in it nearly every day, and Eliza's portrait, which was passed round the table at Skelton and Kirkleatham, while all the guests, even the ladies, "who hate grace in another", drank to the health of the original. Visits to his best friends were only distractions which drew him from the quiet of Coxwold, with which, as it was now haunted by Mrs. Draper's spirit, he was never so much in love. "O 'tis a delicious retreat", he exclaimed on returning from Skelton, "both from its beauty, and air of Solitude; and so sweetly does every thing about it invite your mind to rest from its Labours and be at peace with itself and the world——That 'tis the only place, Eliza, I could live in at this juncture.—I hope one day you will like it as much as your Bramin." Until that day should arrive, the apartments set aside for Mrs. Draper were to be occupied by himself. Her likes and dislikes, so far as he remembered them from casual conversation, were consulted in purchasing a chaise for driving about the parish with her by his side in fancy. Her favourite walk, like his own, would likely be to a secluded "convent", as he called it, doubtless the romantic ruins of Byland Abbey under a spur of the Hambleton hills two miles away. Anticipating the morning when Mrs. Draper should visit the ruins with him, he plucked up one day the briars which grew by the edge of the pathway, that they might not scratch or incommode her when she should go swinging upon his arm. And before the summer was over, he built for his future companion a pavillion in a retired corner of his house-garden, where he was wont to stroll or sit in reverie during the heat of the day or in the evening

twilight, waiting for a day's sleep whence he might awake and say: "Behold the Woman Thou hast given me for Wife."

III

Sterne was destined, however, to behold on waking from his visions, not Mrs. Draper bending over him with her large languishing eyes, but the plain, every-day woman who had been given him for wife twenty-five years before. In short, Mrs. Sterne was hastening home post-chaise from France. The collapse of all his fancies Sterne took mainly in good part, commenting gaily, as he anticipated it, upon "the last Trial of conjugal Misery", which he wished to have begin "this moment that it might run its period the faster".

Mrs. Sterne, it will be recalled, was intending to stay in southern France for a year or two longer; but soon after hearing that her husband had fallen under the spell of a Mrs. Draper, she changed her mind. The news was brought to her early in February by an English traveller who crossed her path at Avignon on the road to Italy. Though she told the busybody "that she wished not to be informed and begged him to drop the subject", the rumour made her so uneasy that Lydia was forthwith directed to enquire about it of her father. Sterne's reply that he had indeed a friendship for Mrs. Draper, "but not to infatuation", could hardly be accepted, in the light of subsequent letters describing her as an "incomparable woman", "a drooping lily", etc.; for Mrs. Sterne had heard these very phrases before her marriage, and knew what they meant. Her suspicions were further aroused by the infrequency of her husband's letters and by delays in remittances from Panchaud and Foley, all of which in her opinion argued neglect. When called to account for his conduct, Sterne informed his wife through Lydia that she was getting ninepence out of his every shilling, and that the post, not himself, was responsible for the irregular arrival—and perhaps loss—of his letters. Amid these misunderstandings, Sterne was glad to receive a hint that they would all be cleared up by the return of his wife and daughter to Coxwold for the summer. "For God's sake

persuade her", Sterne wrote to Lydia of his wife near the first of April, "to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation—and whilst she lives in one country, and I in another, many people suppose it proceeds from choice—besides, I want thee near me, thou child and darling of my heart."

But Sterne's attitude towards the return of his wife and daughter was reversed by subsequent letters from them outlining their plans. They were coming home, it was made clear to him, merely for a visit at his expense without the slightest intention of resuming their former life at York and Coxwold. After a few months with him, they would go back to France, where they were to leave behind them all their clothes, plate, and linen; and in order that they might never again be incommoded by the want of money, the demand was made upon Sterne that he should purchase for them an annuity of £200 in the French funds. This was certainly a proposition at which a country parson receiving a few hundred pounds a year from his books might well balk. All his friends commiserated with him, advising him to sell "my life dear and fight valiantly in defence both of my property and life". Hall-Stevenson, outdoing the rest, made Yorick's conjugal tribulations the theme of "an affecting little poem" to circulate among the Demoniacs. Sterne, likewise falling into the jest of the situation, poured forth pages of self-pity over madame's approaching reconciliation with her husband. To Mrs. James he wrote: "I went five hundred miles the last Spring, out of my way, to pay my wife a week's visit—and she is at the expence of coming post a thousand miles to return it.—What a happy pair! —however, en passant, she takes back sixteen hundred pounds into France with her—and will do me the honour likewise to strip me of every thing I have." And similar, but more amusing in its details, is the record of the journal for Mrs. Draper: "I shall be pillaged in a hundred small Items by them—which I have a Spirit above saying, *no*—to; as Provisions of all sorts of Linnens—for house use—Body use—printed Linnens for Gowns—Mazareens of Teas—Plate, (all I have but six Silver Spoons)—In short I

shall be pluck'd bare—all but of your Portrait and Snuff Box and your other dear Presents—and the neat furniture of my thatch'd Palace—and upon these I set up Stock again, Eliza."

Notwithstanding his humorous murmurings, Sterne acquiesced after a month or two in his wife's plan for a settlement, and awaited her arrival for the purpose more complacently perhaps than is implied by a literal reading of his journal. He was quite willing to be fleeced or to have his back flayed, provided he could escape with his life. All else Mrs. Sterne might gather up and decamp with, whither she list, on condition that she trouble him no more. His apparent indifference, which no one will take too seriously, did not prevent him from sending to his wife and daughter his customary directions for a safe and comfortable journey. Lydia was told to throw all her rouge pots into the Sorgue before setting out from Avignon, for no rouge should ever invade Shandy Hall; but she might bring along her lively French dog, though he was rather "devilish" the last time Sterne saw him, as a companion for the lonely house-cat purring by Yorick's side, if she would promise to guard against "a combustion" when the two animals met. On reaching Paris, the travellers were to go at once to Panchaud's, who would offer them every civility, fill their purses, and advise them about the proposed annuity. While in the city they were to make all necessary purchases of clothing; and as soon as they arrived in London, Mrs. Sterne was to take out a life insurance policy in favour of Lydia. Finally, they must inform him, several posts ahead, of their coming, that he might be in York to meet them with his chaise and long-tailed horses, neither of which had they ever seen. Though the chaise had already been given to Mrs. Draper in the fancies which he was weaving about her, he could yet say to his wife and daughter, "The moment you both have put your feet in it, call it hereafter yours".

Mrs. Sterne and Lydia arrived in York, where Sterne awaited them, on the last day of September; and the next morning they enjoyed their first ride in the new chaise over to Coxwold. Sterne was a little fearful that he might not

find grace with madame, but there occurred no untoward incident, much less a scene. The greeting between Sterne and his daughter, now a young woman, was most cordial. "My Lydia", Sterne wrote immediately to his Parisian banker, "seems transported with the sight of me.—Nature, dear Panchaud, breathes in all her composition; and except a little vivacity—which is a fault in the world we live in—I am fully content with her mother's care of her." He likewise intended it as a compliment when a few days later he added in the postscript of a letter to Mrs. James: "My girl has returned an elegant accomplished little slut—my wife—but I hate to praise my wife—'tis as much as decency will allow to praise my daughter." The united family apparently passed a pleasant month together, during which the details of Mrs. Sterne's plan were discussed and worked out to a slightly different issue. A prospective purchaser was found for a part or the whole of their real estate, which was to be turned into an annuity for Lydia; and Mrs. Sterne was promised a liberal allowance. These financial arrangements and other stipulations, as finally agreed upon when husband and wife decided to go apart after a marriage of twenty-five years, are all summed up in a postscript to the journal under the date of the first of November:

"All, my dearest Eliza, has turn'd out more favourable than my hopes—Mrs. S.— and my dear Girl have been two Months [a slip for one month] with me and they have this day left me to go to spend the Winter at York, after having settled every thing to their heart's content—Mrs. Sterne retires into France, whence she purposes not to stir, till her death,—and never, has she vow'd, will [she] give me another sorrowful or discontented hour.—I have conquerd her, as I would every one else, by humanity and Generosity—and she leaves me, more than half in Love with me.—She goes into the South of France, her health being insupportable in England—and her age, as she now confesses, ten Years more than I thought, being on the edge of sixty——so God bless—and make the remainder of her Life happy—in order to which I am to remit her three hundred guineas a year—and give my dear Girl two thousand pounds,

which, with all Joy, I agree to,—but tis to be sunk into an annuity in the French Loans.”

Behindhand a month with the *Sentimental Journey*, Sterne did not accompany his wife and daughter to York, but had them driven in by his man. None of the three wished the approaching separation to be regarded as quite final. The version of it which was to go to the world, Sterne gave out in a letter to Arthur Lee, descriptive of the affecting scene between himself and Lydia as the chaise stood by the door of Shandy Hall:

“Mrs. Sterne’s health is insupportable in England.—She must return to France, and justice and humanity forbid me to oppose it.—I will allow her enough to live comfortably, until she can rejoin me.—My heart bleeds, Lee, when I think of parting with my child—’twill be like the separation of soul and body—and equal to nothing but what passes at that tremendous moment; and like it in one respect, for she will be in one kingdom, whilst I am in another.—You will laugh at my weakness—but I cannot help it—for she is a dear, disinterested girl—As a proof of it—when she left Coxwold, and I bade her adieu, I pulled out my purse and offered her ten guineas for her private pleasures—her answer was pretty, and affected me too much: ‘No, my dear papa, our expences of coming from France may have straiten’d you—I would rather put an hundred guineas into your pocket than take ten out of it.’—I burst into tears.”

CHAPTER XX

THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

JUNE 1767—FEBRUARY 1768

APART from its strict biographical details, the journal to Eliza has several interesting aspects. The chief of them no one can regard as literary, though the manuscript offers an opportunity here and there for studying Sterne's method of composition from the first hastily written sentence down to the smoothing out of phrase and clause with new words in a new order. The manuscript also casts a curious side-light on the psychology of Sterne's plagiarisms. In his *Sermons* and in *Shandy*, he stole, it is charged, from others; in the journal he stole from himself. A good passage or a good story, whether originally his own or somebody else's, he could not keep from reworking when occasion called for it, any more than could Charles Lamb. A letter, for example, to Arthur Lee describing the golden age at Coxwold, was adjusted a month later to the journal; and in reverse order, the Shandean account of Sterne's illness, first recorded in the journal, was retold in a letter to the Earl of Shelburne. The dear Eliza of the journal was frequently transformed into dear Lydia for letters to his daughter, each being "the sweet light burthen" which he hoped to bear in his arms up the "hill of preferment"; and, stranger still, long passages were taken from the stale letters to Miss Lumley, written as far back as 1740, and transferred to Mrs. Draper, as applicable, with few changes, to the new situation. It was hardly more than writing "Molly" for "Fanny", or "our faithful friend Mrs. James" for "the good Miss S——", and the old "sentimental repasts" with Miss Lumley in Little Alice Lane—house-maid, confidante, and all—could be thereby served up anew for Mrs. Draper in Bond Street.

But the real significance of the journal to Eliza lies not

in its literary artifice nor in its parallelisms, which would be disreputable were the process not so amusing; it lies in the fact that it completely reveals the pathological state of the emotions—long suspected but never quite known to a certainty—whence sprang the *Sentimental Journey*, during the composition of which Sterne was fast dying of consumption, barely keeping himself afoot much of the time with ass's milk; for when he ventured upon a more substantial diet, there stared him in the face the dreadful corrosive mercury. Each work is the counterpart of the other. In the journal, we have the crude expression of the maudlin sentiment which often accompanies a wasting disease; in the *Sentimental Journey*, we have sentiment refined to an art so exquisite as to place the author among the first masters of English prose. In real life, Sterne bursts into a flood of tears while conversing with Mrs. James over their separation from Eliza—he almost faints, and with difficulty reaches the door; in fancy, he weeps his handkerchief wet over the distracted maid of Moulins who has lost her lover. In the journal, he plucks up the briars along the path which Mrs. Draper will sometime tread by his side; in the *Sentimental Journey*, it is a nettle or two growing upon the grave of a poor Franciscan whose feelings he has wounded. In the one he communes with the house-cat as she lies purring by the fire; in the other with a travel-worn German peasant sitting on the stone bench of the inn by Nampont, and weeping at the death of the donkey which has been his faithful companion all the way to the shrine of St. James of Compostella and thus far on the long journey home to Franconia. Eliza, her miniature always opposite to him on his desk when he took pen in hand, sat for the slightly varied portraits of the brown lady, the grisette, and the *fille de chambre* of the *Sentimental Journey*, all of whom awaken precisely the same sexual emotions, never quite gross but sometimes suggestive of grossness. It is not the strong, healthy sexuality of Smollett or Fielding, but rather the sexuality of waste and enervation, such as inspired the harmless passion for Mrs. Draper, a feeble stir of the blood which Sterne felt as he held the hand of a beautiful woman, stooped to fasten her shoe-buckle, or

slept in a room near her at a wayside inn. It is all quite innocent provided one takes it so.

A book of travels, we remember, had been in Sterne's mind ever since the winter at Toulouse, and in the succeeding instalment of *Tristram Shandy* he tried his hand, we also remember, at one based upon his journey from Calais to Paris and south to Avignon and across the plains of Languedoc. His ideal at that time was comedy running into farce and satire. To this end he played with current guide books, whose *videnda* were eventually set aside in favour of ludicrous incidents by the way, accompanied with the claim, gravely expressed, that he loved better than all else dusty thoroughfares along which there was nothing to see, and so nothing to relate, beyond an occasional beggar, pilgrim, or fig-vender on the road to Beaucaire. The idea was well enough worked out in a narrative memorable for Old Honesty and the vintage dance; but with the plan as a whole, details neglected, there was nothing very novel or striking. It was in fact only a whimsical variant, however well carried through, of the comic adventures which everybody had read in Cervantes, Scarron, or Fielding. Clearly not satisfied with the outcome, Sterne made another tour abroad to gain, besides his health, fresh incidents for a second journey which should include Italy also.

In the meantime Dr. Smollett, likewise sick and in fear of death, had gone over nearly the same route and brought out two volumes of *Travels through France and Italy*. Keen as was the novelist's intelligence, his irritable temper, accentuated by overstrained nerves, warped everything he saw. Crossing Smollett's path somewhere, most likely, we have said, at Montpellier, Sterne introduced him into the *Sentimental Journey* as a type of the "splenetic traveller" under the appropriate name of "Smelfungus", and as a fit companion to "Mundungus", or "the proud traveller"—a thin disguise for Dr. Samuel Sharp, another sick surgeon who was publishing his impressions of the Continent.* "The learned Smelfungus", says Sterne, "travelled from Boulogne to Paris—from Paris to Rome—and so on—but he set out

* *Letters from Italy* (London, 1766).

with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he pass'd by was discoloured or distorted—He wrote an account of them, but 'twas nothing but the account of his miserable feelings." The inn at a seaport town near Genoa where the novelist took up his night's lodging was kept, says Smollett's record, by a butcher who "had very much the looks of an assassin. His wife was a great masculine virago, who had all the air of having frequented the slaughter-house. * * *

We had a very bad supper, miserably dressed, passed a very disagreeable night, and paid a very extravagant bill in the morning. I was very glad to get out of the house with my throat uncut". The women of Italy Smollett found "the most haughty, insolent, capricious, and revengeful females on the face of the earth". The Tuscan speech, so often praised for its sweetness, was to his ear harsh and disagreeable. "It sounds", he said, "as if the speaker had lost his palate. I really imagined the first man I heard speak in Pisa had met with that misfortune in the course of his amours." While in Florence, he was attracted to the Uffizi gallery by the fame of the Venus de Medici; but he at once discovered, to quote again famous phrases, that there is "no beauty in the features" of the marvellous statue, and that "the attitude is awkward and out of character." When he reached Rome, he was "much disappointed at the sight of the Pantheon which looks", said the sick traveller, "like a huge cockpit, open at the top. * * *

Within side it has much the air of a mausoleum. It was this appearance which, in all probability, suggested the thought to Boniface IV, to transport hither eight-and-twenty cart-loads of old rotten bones, dug from different burying-places, and then dedicate it as a church to the blessed Virgin and all the holy martyrs."

The reaction of Sterne's mind upon Smollett's gave him the point of view for which he had been long striving. Like Smollett's, his travels were to deal with observation, personal and direct, rather than with incident, comic or exciting; but "my observations", he said, "shall be altogether of a different cast than any of my forerunners", just as my temperament, he might have added, differs from theirs. In distinction from the jaundiced traveller, to whose eye all

things, they say, look yellow, Sterne proclaimed himself the sentimental traveller, or one who, disregarding all the rest, seeks and finds, wherever chance takes him, only those objects and incidents which excite and keep going a series of pleasurable emotions. "Was I in a desert", he said, "I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections——If I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to——I would court their shade, and greet them kindly for their protection——I would cut my name upon them, and swear they were the loveliest trees throughout the desert: if their leaves wither'd, I would teach myself to mourn, and when they rejoiced, I would rejoice along with them." His design in writing the *Sentimental Journey*, he told Mrs. James, "was to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do——so it runs most upon those gentler passions and affections, which aid so much to it". There was also a more personal aim hinted at here and there in Sterne's letters. Feeling the approach of death, he wished to leave the world with a different impression than had been made upon it by *Tristram Shandy*. Above his humour, which had led him into many indecorums of speech, he prized his sensibility, which had kept his heart right, as everybody might now see for himself. That side of his talent which the public had admired in the story of Le Fever was now to find expression on a larger scale. Incidentally the book was to be so chaste that it might lie upon any lady's table; or heaven have mercy upon her imagination.

Subdued to this mood by passion and disease, Sterne began the *Sentimental Journey* within a week of his arrival at Coxwold towards the end of May. Ten days were passed in sorting and arranging the miscellaneous notes and sketches of his travels, which had long lain by him, before he was ready to write the introductory chapter immortalising the name of Eliza. At first, progress was slow because of extreme weakness and the intrusion of Mrs. Draper's image in and out of season. "Cannot write my Travels", was the pretty complaint on the third of June, "or give one half hour's close attention to them, upon thy Account, my dearest friend

—Yet write I must, and what to do with you, whilst I write—I declare I know not—I want to have you ever before my Imagination—and cannot keep you out of my heart or head. * * * Now I must shut you out sometimes—or meet you Eliza! with an empty purse upon the Beach.” At length health mended; the journal to Eliza, which kept his heart bleeding, was closed up; and all his energies were bent upon the book that he must have ready for his subscribers by the next winter. “It is a subject”, Sterne informed Mrs. James when well into it, “which works well, and suits the frame of mind I have been in for some time past.” During the period of composition, the manuscript was submitted to the Demoniacs and other “Geniuses of the North”, who declared it, Sterne assured Becket in September, “an Original work and likely to take in all Kinds of Readers”; but “the proof of the pudding”, the author added, “is in the eating”.*

The even course of Sterne’s pleasure at his task was broken by a week’s illness in August “with a spitting of blood”, and by the visit of his wife and daughter, to whose comfort and entertainment was devoted the entire month of October. To make up for lost time, Sterne spurred on his Pegasus violently through November, “determined not to draw bit”, until his book should be completed. Utterly exhausted by this final spurt, he wrote to the Earl of Shelburne at the end of the month: “Yorick * * * has worn out both his spirits and body with the Sentimental Journey—’tis true that an author must feel himself, or his reader will not—but I have torn my whole frame into pieces by my feelings.” Thereupon followed the inevitable collapse—a succession of hemorrhages with fever, which confined Sterne to his room for three weeks. As soon as the fever left him, his old buoyancy of spirit brought him to his feet again, and he set off for London in company with Hall-Stevenson, who was going up to see through the press a volume of facetious verse-tales called *Makarony Fables*. The journey was mere madness on Sterne’s part, for nothing was left of him but a shadow. “I am weak”, the Jameses were warned in advance

* *Notes and Queries*, second series, IV, 126.

while he was resting at York, "I am weak, my dear friends, both in body and mind——so God bless you——you will see me enter like a ghost——so I tell you before-hand not to be frightened."

But besides having a book to publish, Sterne still believed that he might once more recruit mind and body, as had so often happened in past years, by a change of scene and faces. For months his friends had been calling him to London, all eager to hear him read from his sentimental travels amid the old intimacies. Lord Shelburne, he hoped, would be pleased with his book, and then his labour would not have been in vain. The earl must, it was urged, make the acquaintance of the Jameses before the winter was over. "You would esteem the husband, and honour the wife——she is the reverse of most of her sex——they have various pursuits——she but one—that of pleasing her husband." Sir George Macartney wrote to Yorick from St. Petersburg, where the diplomat was negotiating a commercial treaty with Russia; and after his return Sterne congratulated him upon the success of his mission, adding "I shall have the honour of presenting to you a *couple of as clean brats* as ever chaste brain conceiv'd." Macartney, Craufurd, and Sterne were to renew their convivial friendship. A certain "Sir W", perhaps Sir William Stanhope, brother to Chesterfield and one of the Delaval set, came north during September for a week at Scarborough, stopping at York, where he and Sterne met over their "barley water" at Bluitt's Inn in Lendal. This gentleman was to be convinced by the *Sentimental Journey* that sensibility has no kinship with sensuality. "I take heav'n to witness", Sterne replied to him on being rallied for the freedoms of *Tristram Shandy*, "I take heav'n to witness, after all this *badinage* my heart is innocent——and the sporting of my pen is equal, just equal, to what I did in my boyish days, when I got astride of a stick, and gallop'd away. * * * Praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has often made me wretched, yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt." Among friends without rank were not forgotten honest Sancho, who must make his usual morning calls in Bond Street; and

Arthur Lee, to whom Sterne was continuing to give expert counsel in matters of the heart.

Mrs. James was deeply chagrined when she heard a rumour that Yorick had paid a flying visit to London in the autumn without calling upon her. Sterne set the idle story at rest, explaining how it all may have come about, and remonstrating with his friend that she should even fancy him capable of so great incivility: "Good God! to think I could be in town, and not go the first step I made to Gerrard Street!—My mind and body must be at sad variance with each other, should it ever fall out that it is not both the first and last place also where I shall betake myself, were it only to say, 'God bless you.' * * * I * * * never more felt the want of a house I esteem so much, as I do now when I can hear tidings of it so seldom—and have nothing to recompense my desires of seeing its kind possessors, but the hopes before me of doing it by Christmas." Mrs. Ferguson, the witty widow who welcomed Sterne to London eight years before with his first "extraordinary book", was waiting for January when she might obtain a peep at the *Sentimental Journey*. Beyond the widow's name, nothing is known of this sincere friend to the whole Sterne family. And there was another unknown woman, a certain Hannah, who, falling across Sterne's way last season, wished to be still kept in his memory. Hannah was a sprightly girl, whose chit-chat amused him and to whom he replied in kind, claiming, on the receipt of her first letter during the summer, that he could not exactly place her among the many Queens of Sheba who had honoured him with visits. "It could not be", he replied, "the lady in Bond-street [Mrs. Draper], or Grosvenor-street, or ——— Square, or Pall Mall.—We shall make it out, Hannah, when we meet. * * * How do you do? Which parts of Tristram do you like best?—God bless you." With the help of another letter from Hannah, he was able to recall the "good dear girl" and her sister Fanny, whom the *Sentimental Journey*, Yorick predicted, "shall make * * * cry as much as ever it made me laugh, or I'll give up the business of sentimental writing".

Thus anticipating the pleasure of laying a new book at

the feet of his friends, Sterne drove up to his old lodgings in Bond Street on the first or second of January, 1768. It was the worst sort of weather, cold, raw, and damp. Influenza had set in and was carrying off poor people so fast that the newspapers feared not enough labourers would be left to do the work of the next summer. Everybody was warned against exposure to the inclemency of the season. "Their Majesties", said the newspapers, under date of Monday the fourth of January, "did not attend service yesterday at the Chapel Royal on account of the badness of the weather, but had private service performed in their apartments at the Queen's palace." On that Sunday, Sterne, becoming careful of his health for the first time in his life, watched the rain from his window all day, forgoing the pleasure of a call on the Jameses and of dining with them and their friends in the evening. But mindful of the engagement, he sent over to Gerrard Street the compliments of the new year to all the household gathered about the firesides—"Miss Ascough the wise, Miss Pigot the witty, your daughter the pretty, and so on"—with an enclosure for Lord Ossory, should he be present. On Sterne's table lay scattered cards, notes, and invitations out, enough to carry him through a fortnight of dinners. Among them was an urgent request from Mrs. James for aid in obtaining a ticket to Mrs. Cornelys's forthcoming assembly. Never before had there been so great a demand for tickets to this social function, which was to assume added splendour this year. Mrs. James, at whose table sat Lord Ossory, had pleaded with all her friends, and had everywhere failed. Would Mr. Sterne use his influence? Sterne wrote back that he was not a subscriber to Soho this year, but that he might be depended upon to do his best for her. So he began despatching notes round among his friends; and as they all brought in unfavourable responses, he set out himself the next morning to see what he could do by his presence. The episode concluded pleasantly, if unsuccessfully, with the following letter to the Jameses, which may be dated Monday, January 4, 1768:

"My dear Friends,——I have never been a moment at rest since I wrote yesterday about this Soho ticket——I have

been at a Secretary of State to get one—have been upon one knee to my friend Sir George Macartney, Mr. Lascelles—and Mr. Fitzmaurice*—without mentioning five more—I believe I could as soon get you a place at court, for everybody is going—but I will go out and try a new circle—and if you do not hear from me by a quarter after three, you may conclude I have been unfortunate in my supplications.—I send you this state of the affair, lest my silence should make you think I had neglected what I promised—but no—Mrs. James knows me better, and would never suppose it would be out of the head of one who is with so much truth her faithful friend. L. Sterne.”

Though Sterne felt unequal to a Soho assembly, he was drawn, so far as health would permit, rather reluctantly into the old life. If his friends could not have him always at their tables, they attended him in Bond Street, where was held every morning a sort of levee. “I am now tyed down”, he complained to the Jameses in February, “neck and heels (twice over) by engagements every day this week, or most joyfully would have trod the old pleasing road from Bond to Gerrard street. * * * I am quite well, but exhausted with a room full of company every morning till dinner—How do I lament I cannot eat my morsel (which is always sweet) with such kind friends!” As usual, his guests sent in little presents for remembrance, or enrolled themselves among his subscribers, in return for the pleasure of hearing the charming Yorick read from his sentimental travels in advance of publication. This year he was especially honoured with a series of prints from “L. S——n Esq”, as the heading to a letter has the blundering disguise, but really, I think, from George Selwyn, the grim wit and politician, who put his name down for the *Sentimental Journey*. On receiving the gift, accompanied by a note proffering friendship, Sterne replied in his most courteous manner, beginning: “Your commendations are very flattering. I know no one whose judgment I think more highly of, but your partiality for me is the only instance in which I can call it in question.—

* Probably Edwin Lascelles, M.P. for Yorkshire; and Thomas Fitzmaurice, M.P. for Calne.

Thanks, my good sir, for the prints—I am much your debtor for them—if I recover from my ill state of health and live to revisit Coxwold this summer, I will decorate my study with them, along with six beautiful pictures I have already of the sculptures on poor Ovid's tomb."

There came to Sterne also a much prized gift from overseas in the form of a curiously carved walking-stick, double handled and twisted into all sorts of shapes, which a Dr. Eustace of North Carolina sent over in company with a letter giving its history and uses. The colonial physician, after introducing himself as "a great admirer of Tristram Shandy" and "one of his most zealous defenders against the repeated assaults of prejudice and misapprehension", went on to explain whimsically why the walking-stick should belong to Sterne. "The only reason", he said, "that gave rise to this address to you, is my accidentally having met with a piece of true Shandean statuary, I mean according to vulgar opinion, for to such judges both appear equally destitute of regularity or design.—It was made by a very ingenious gentleman of this province, and presented to the late Governor Dobbs, after his death Mrs. D. gave it me: its singularity made many desirous of procuring it, but I had resolved, at first, not to part with it, till, upon reflection, I thought it would be a very proper and probably not an unacceptable, compliment to my favourite author, and in his hands might prove as ample a field for meditation as a button-hole, or a broom-stick."

It was too late for the walking stick of Governor Dobbs ever to go into *Tristram Shandy*; but Sterne sent back by the next ship a meditation, taking, as the physician wished, the singular gift as a symbol of his book for an attack upon all who had failed to appreciate its humour. Never quite sound in his judgment since the old days of his quarrel with his uncle Jaques, Sterne still imagined that he had been persecuted through his literary career by a conspiracy formed against him. Under date of February 9, 1768, Sterne wrote to Dr. Eustace:

"Sir, I this moment received your obliging letter and Shandean piece of sculpture along with it, of both which

testimonies of your regard I have the justest sense, and return you, dear Sir, my best thanks and acknowledgement. Your walking stick is in no sense more Shandaic than in that of its having more handles than one; the parallel breaks only in this, that in using the stick, every one will take the handle which suits his convenience. In *Tristram Shandy* the handle is taken which suits the passions, their ignorance, or their sensibility. There is so little true feeling in the herd of the world, that I wish I could have got an act of parliament, when the books first appeared, that none but wise men should look into them. It is too much to write books, and find heads to understand them; the world, however, seems to come into a better temper about them, the people of genius here, being to a man on its side; and the reception it has met with in France, Italy, and Germany, has engaged one part of the world to give it a second reading. The other, in order to be on the strongest side, has at length agreed to speak well of it too. A few hypocrites and tartuffes, whose approbation could do it nothing but dishonour, remain unconverted.

“I am very proud, Sir, to have had a man like you on my side from the beginning; but it is not in the power of every one to taste humour, however he may wish it; it is the gift of God: and, besides, a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him; his own ideas are only called forth by what he reads, and the vibrations within him intirely correspond with those excited.—’Tis like reading himself—and not the book.

“In a week’s time I shall be delivered of two volumes of the *Sentimental Travels* of Mr. Yorick through France and Italy; but, alas! the ship sails three days too soon, and I have but to lament it deprives me of the pleasure of presenting them to you.

“Believe me, dear Sir, with great thanks for the honour you have done me, with true esteem, your obliged humble servant, Laurence Sterne.”

Having uttered his last word on *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne was looking forward, as we see, to the *Sentimental Journey*, which was to win over the poor remainder of his enemies. The work had been passing through the press rather slowly,

owing to the author's numerous corrections in the text, apparently down to the moment of publication. To judge from the extant part of the manuscript,* now in the British Museum, and comprising the first volume as published, Sterne brought up with him from Coxwold a fair copy in his own hand for the printer, leaving blank always the versos and sometimes a recto, with a view to easy changes and additions. There is a notion, warranted only by Yorick's jesting remarks, that Sterne was a careless writer who put down and printed whatever came into his head without premeditation. How false this notion is I have shown in discussing *Tristram Shandy*, whose several instalments were playfully organised, we concluded, on Locke's theory of associated ideas, while all details were studied with scrupulous concern for humorous or pathetic effects. Much that was there half guessed at may be seen in the manuscript of the *Sentimental Journey*—a neat, underlying copy, which after six weeks of intermittent labour was covered all over with deletions, and interlinear substitutions reaching out into margins and blank pages. Sterne knew, artist as he was, that a point just missed may sometimes be retrieved merely by a new word or a new phrase.

It is perhaps saying too much to imply that Sterne had any occasion in the last stages of his book to retrieve himself from real failure. Already complete was that wonderful series of portraits, ebbing and flowing with the author's emotions, in the order as we now have them, from the poor Franciscan, the Flemish lady, and La Fleur, on to the dwarf and the beautiful grisette from whom Yorick purchased the gloves. It is rather that these portraits sometimes needed here and there just those touches which make for perfection. No scene in the *Sentimental Journey* struck the fancy of Europe more than the exchange of snuff-boxes between Yorick and Father Lorenzo after their sweet contention. It led in Germany, few probably know, to the formation of little coteries for the study of Sterne, the members of which presented one another with horn snuff-boxes, and promised to cultivate Yorick's gentleness, content with fortune, and

* *Egerton MSS.*, 1610.

pity and pardon for all human errors.* Before turning in his manuscript to the printer, Sterne hesitated between a bald relation of the incident and the details as the world now knows them. In its cancelled form the passage read: "The monk rubbed his horn box upon his sleeve and presented it to me with one hand, as he took mine from me in the other; and having kissed it, with a stream of good nature in his eyes he put it into his bosome—and took his leave." When printed, the passage ran: "The monk rubb'd his horn box upon the sleeve of his tunick; and as soon as it had acquired a little air of brightness by the friction—he made a low bow, and said, 'twas too late to say whether it was the weakness or goodness of our tempers which had involved us in this contest——But be it as it would——he begg'd we might exchange boxes——In saying this, he presented his to me with one hand, as he took mine from me in the other; and having kissed it—with a stream of good nature in his eyes he put it into his bosom—and took his leave." How much the scene gains by the elaboration every one must feel. The mendicant who had come to ask an alms, gave instead all that he had to Yorick, but not until he had heightened the value of his gift by "a little air of brightness". In view of what Sterne did here, we wonder whether we should not regard as a happy afterthought the *bit of rust* which caught the eye of the Marquis of E * * * *, as he drew his sword from its scabbard before the assembled states at Rennes, and, dropping a tear upon the place, remarked "I shall find some *other way* to get it off".

The account of Monsieur Dessein's vamped-up chaise, for whose sorrowful adventures through the passes of Savoy and over Mont Cenis Yorick sought to awaken pity, was rather tame as Sterne originally had it; for he wrote at first: "Much indeed was not to be said for it—but something might—and when a few little words will set the poor chaise of an innocent traveller agoing, I hate the man who can be a churl of them." Subsequently a clause was crossed out

* For the queer story of these Lorenzo orders, see H. W. Thayer, *Laurence Sterne in Germany*, 84-89 (New York, 1905): and J. Longo, *Laurence Sterne and Johann Georg Jacobi*, 39-44 (Wien und Leipzig, 1898).

and another written in its place, so as to make the whole read: "Much indeed was not to be said for it—but something might—and when a few words will rescue misery out of her distress, I hate the man who can be a churl of them." On this passage, Thackeray once put the rhetorical question: "Does anybody believe that this is a real Sentiment? that this luxury of generosity, this gallant rescue of Misery—out of an old cab, is genuine feeling." Whether Sterne or Thackeray was right, it is worth while to observe that the sentiment was fully premeditated. The sketch of the beautiful Fleming whom Yorick on a sudden turn of his head met full in the face on his way to Monsieur Dessein's magazine of chaises, was likewise carefully reworked. "Heaven forbid!" the strange lady exclaimed in the first version, "laying her hand upon her eyes". But as this is not the natural gesture in warding off a threatened blow, Sterne substituted "raising her hand up to her forehead". A moment later Yorick took the stranger's hand and led her towards the *remise* door in silence; whereof Sterne remarked that it was one of those situations "which can happen to a man but once in his life". In after-thought he struck out the parenthesis, preferring to leave undetermined the rarity of the occurrence in real life.

The lament of the Franconian peasant over his dead ass by the roadside caused Sterne much trouble; for several of the sentences were begun, abandoned, and tried two or three times over before the sentiment could be rendered precisely as he wished it. Another perplexity was who should compose the merry kitchen at Amiens on the evening when La Fleur pulled out his fife and led off in the dance. At the first trial Sterne was certain that the "*fille de chambre*, the *maître d'hôtel*, the cook, the scullion, etc." would be there; but it took two more humorous trials to unroll *etc.* into "all the household, dogs, and cats, besides an old monkey". There was some doubt, too, as to the sobriquet most fitting for Smollett, the author's arch-enemy. Sterne had him at first Smeldungus, but left him Smelfungus. In like manner was partially deodorised the anecdote told of Madame de Rambouliet, by merely substituting a French phrase for the plain,

blunt English, originally writ large. Again, while counting the pulse of the grisette, Yorick lost his reckoning, it will be remembered, at the fortieth pulsation, owing to the unexpected entrance of the husband, who passed through the shop from the back parlour to the street. As a late addition came the grisette's remark—" 'Twas nobody but her husband",—which put Yorick at his ease in running up a fresh score on the pretty wrist still extended towards him. On bidding adieu, Yorick gave the hand of the beautiful grisette, as it was first written, "something betwixt a shake and a squeeze". Had the vulgarity been permitted to stand, the scene would have been spoiled, so whimsically delicate is it in every other detail.

These are merely examples of Sterne's alterations, so numerous that no adequate notion could be given of them without photographing large parts of the manuscript. True, one turns many a clean folio, but substitutions such as have been described are the rule; words and phrases are also frequently transposed, and sentences are recast, curtailed, or added to,—all for exactness, clearness, and rhythm. Every change, however, relates to details, never to the general outline of a portrait or to the emotional transition from one to another, any difficulties with which, if they were encountered, are not revealed by a manuscript wherein we see the author only refining, sometimes to an amusing degree. For example, Yorick was not sure whether the packet which bore him across the Channel should reach port at one, two, or three o'clock in the afternoon. He first wrote *two*, then *one*, and finally drawing his pen through each, settled upon *three* o'clock as affording sufficient dramatic time for the Calais episode before the approach of evening. Neither was he sure whether he gave six or eight sous to "the sons and daughters of poverty" who surrounded him as he was leaving the inn at Montreuil; nor whether, on his return to Calais, he walked *a league* or *two leagues* to pluck "a nettle or two" growing over the grave of the late Father Lorenzo.

More important than attentions to time, place, and number, is the keen sense that Sterne everywhere displayed for the differences of meaning between synonyms, though

the right word was often slow in making its appearance. Of the following list, he finally chose the second of each pair, crossing out the first and writing the second above it or on the margin: *insolence* and *triumph*, *literata* and *précieuse*, *quest* and *pursuit*, *withdrew* and *disengaged*, *hurt* and *mortified*, *motives* and *movements*, *consolation* and *comfort*, *donnoit* and *présentoit*, *un joli garçon* and *a clever young fellow*, and so on in a descent through scores of others to *ocean* and *sea*, *entered* and *came into*, where rhythm or the desire to escape repetition won the day. Throughout the process Sterne managed his French easily. At times it was not quite correct; accents were often forgotten; and occasionally were dropped off final vowels and consonants of words like *Londre* for *Londres* and *désobligeant* for *désobligeante*; but it was all clear enough to the eye. Beyond these and similar slips, the French translator of the *Sentimental Journey* found it necessary to make very few corrections in the many French phrases scattered through the book. For Sterne's *fille de chambre* was substituted the more usual *femme de chambre*, though both were in use; and *voilà un persiflage* of necessity became *voilà du persiflage*; while the *billet doux* which Yorick sent to Madame de L * * * was left intact except for *corporal*, which should have been *caporal*.

Here in the *Sentimental Journey* occurs Sterne's beautiful rendering of the French proverb: *A brebis tondue Dieu mesure le vent*. "God tempers the wind", said the unfortunate maid of Moulins, "to the shorn lamb." Precisely how Sterne attained to the perfect phrasing along with the perfect rhythm, no one can ever know, for the manuscript does not extend thus far; but if inference be justifiable from analogies supported by the manuscript, moral epigrams did not come to him in full expression all at once and without effort. To cite an instance, Yorick was so disturbed while at the Opéra Comique by the boorish conduct of a German towards a dwarf standing in front of him in the parterre, that he was ready to leap out of his box and run to the aid of the poor fellow. Over Yorick's emotions, Sterne first remarked: "An injury sharpen'd by an insult is insuf-

ferable"; but not satisfied with the commonplace, he ran his pen through the last part of the sentence, and then reworked the whole to "An injury sharpen'd by an insult, be it to whom it will, makes every man of sentiment a party." And so it likely was with the famous proverb, which seems easy enough to frame now that the feat has been accomplished. It was only throwing, one may say, the French sentence into the English order and translating *mesure* by *tempers*, and there you have Sterne. Yes: but George Herbert tried his hand at the French proverb in a slightly different form before *près* had dropped out between *brebis* and *tondue*, and gave us the awkward "To a close shorne sheep God gives wind by measure."* Sterne tried his hand and gave us "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb", thereby puzzling many a clergyman who has taken the proverb for a text and afterwards searched in vain for it through the wisdom of Solomon.

Not since the first instalment of *Tristram Shandy* had Sterne taken so great pains with a book, the publication of which Becket was forced to delay until Wednesday or Thursday, the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of February, 1768,† a full month beyond the usual time for Sterne to make his annual literary entrance into society. The work, bearing the title *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, appeared in two styles—in two small octavo volumes with pages measuring about six inches by three and three quarters, and in two larger octavo volumes on imperial paper with wide-margined pages measuring about seven inches by four. In the first style, the price of the set, pages sewed but unbound, was five shillings; in the second style, the price was apparently half a guinea. Except for one episode clearly out of place and for a few incidental references, the travels contained nothing about Italy; indeed they were extended beyond Paris only by working over in a more sentimental mood the story of Maria and the scene of the vintage dance from *Tristram Shandy*, with the addition of an anecdote retold after John Craufurd of Errol. But as an an-

* *Outlandish Proverbs*, No. 861 (London, 1640).

† Registered at Stationers' Hall, Feb. 27, 1768.

nouncement that the public might expect an Italian tour in continuation, Sterne had a loose page printed and slipped into the copies for his subscribers. The loose page, rarely to be seen nowadays, read as follows:

“Advertisement.

THE Author begs leave to acknowledge to his Subscribers, that they have a further claim upon him for Two Volumes more than these delivered to them now, and which nothing but ill health could have prevented him, from having ready along with these.

“The Work will be compleated and delivered to the Subscribers early the next Winter.”*

There were two hundred and eighty-one subscribers, who took altogether, some entering their names for more than one copy, three hundred and thirty-four sets—one hundred and ninety-nine on ordinary paper, and one hundred and thirty-five on imperial paper. The result may seem disappointing when compared with the immense array that ushered in the *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* only two years before. Of all Sterne's publications, his sermons, it must be admitted, were the most immediately profitable; but their subsequent sale could not be counted upon; nor is a subscribers' list a sure index of a first sale, inasmuch as many a person who would hesitate to patronise a book which might prove another *Tristram Shandy*, would nevertheless purchase and read it. The new list of subscribers, though falling short of expectations, was a most notable advertisement, wherein were again marshalled troops of friends among the nobility, gentry, and distinguished commoners, including nearly everybody prominently connected with his Majesty's government, all the way down

* It has been asserted more than once (*Notes and Queries*, fifth series, IX, 223) that this advertisement was issued with only the large paper copies. This is an error, for the advertisement as given here is taken from a small paper copy.

from the Duke of Grafton, the First Lord of the Treasury. And as an assurance that the book contained nothing to bring a blush to the most innocent cheek, one might read in the roll of ecclesiastical titles, names like York and Peterborough. All who could afford imperial paper had the honour of a star after their names. Sir George Macartney was thus starred for five sets, and "the young rich Mr. Crew" was starred for twenty sets, the largest single subscription except Panchaud's, who engaged the same number of small copies for Paris.

No subscribers' list was necessary to ensure the success of the *Sentimental Journey*, the first edition of which was exhausted within a month.* All who wrote of the book in newspapers, magazines, and letters were now ready to take off their hats to Mr. Sterne's genius. All, I should say, except one. Smelfungus, as the type of the splenetic traveller from "a well-known original", of course could not be passed by without a return thrust from Smollett's man on the *Critical Review*,† who lamented, on observing chapters which bore no number, that Yorick was again imposing upon the public "whim for sentiment and caprice for humour". As the reviewer waxed hot, poor Yorick was charged with "making the sufferings of others the objects of his mirth" and of rising "superior to every regard for taste, truth, observation, and reflection"; while La Fleur, "the least unmeaning" of all the sketches, the angry reviewer finally asserted without any attempt at proof, was "pieced out with shreds * * * barbarously cut out and unskilfully put together from other novels". On the other hand, Walpole, who could never get through three volumes of the "tiresome *Tristram Shandy*", thought the new book "very pleasing, though too much dilated", and recommended it for its "great good nature and strokes of delicacy".‡ One by one the portraits, beginning with the monk and ending with the last scene at the Piedmont inn, were taken up for comment by the *Monthly Review* in a notice running through March and April. Quite

* The second edition appeared on Tuesday, March 29.—*London Chronicle*, March 26-29, 1768.

† May, 1768.

‡ *Letters*, edited by Toynbee, VII, 175.

naturally the reviewer was disposed to sport with his "good cousin Yorick", in memory of old days when each had slashed the other's jerkin; but it was all kindly banter. Why should "one of our first-rate pens", it was asked, write "a black pair of silk breeches" instead of the more accurate "a pair of black silk breeches"? or why should he descend to the vulgarism of *lay* for *lie*, as when he says "Maria should *lay* in my bosom", as if Maria were "the name of a favourite pullet"? But these blemishes were all "pitiful minutiae", it was concluded, of no account in a series of travels abounding in "masterly" portraits, "affecting", "touching", "delicate", and so on through the list of epithets of praise.

Tristram Shandy had long ago made Sterne's name familiar through the greater part of literary Europe. Many read the book in France and in Germany; but few even among its friends at home, Sterne used to say, really understood its drift. Certainly none of those who were translating it had any adequate conception of its meaning. The *Sentimental Journey*, clear of any disorder in its art, could be more easily read. Everybody could feel its sentiment and pathos, though its lurking humour might escape them, just as it escaped Thackeray a century later. True, the *Sentimental Journey* does not cut so deeply into life as does *Tristram Shandy*, the work by which one must finally gauge Sterne's genius; but for literary charm time has rightly given it the preference. The narrative—if it be narrative—moves through a series of dramatic portraits, which, like the emotions underlying them, rise bright out of one another, and, after glowing for a moment, fade away with consummate art. Literature has nothing like these little pictures of French life drawn with a hair brush. They have been aptly compared to the choicest pastels of Latour and Watteau, always delicate and yet always brilliant in their colouring. Unlike *Tristram Shandy*, there was nothing local about the *Sentimental Journey*, nothing provincial, nothing even racial. It at once assumed its place as a cosmopolitan classic by the side of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Translations appeared in French and German within a year, and thereafter in Italian, Spanish, Polish, and Russian.

Bode, the German translator, when puzzled how to render the word *sentimental*, appealed for aid to his friend Lessing, who coined the adjective *empfindsam* after the analogy of *mühsam*, thus giving, through Sterne, a new word to the German language. It was in this translation, followed by *Tristram Shandy* in 1774, that Goethe and Heine mainly knew Sterne, of whom the former once said: "Yorick Sterne is the best type of wit that ever exerted an influence in literature. Whoever reads him feels himself lifted above the petty cares of the world. His humour is inimitable, and it is not every kind of humour that leaves the soul calm and serene."* Frénais, the French translator, likewise troubled for an equivalent of *sentimental*, decided to take the word over into French, in the hope that it would prove useful for expressing a new idea. This mutilated version of the original, missing as often as hitting the point of Sterne's anecdotes, brought Yorick's name and strange personality back to the salons which had been captivated by his conversation. The book, said Madame Suard, amused and pleased many, while some few had for it the most profound contempt. The vivacious Mademoiselle de Sommery, for instance, was surprised that any one should find interest in a dead ass, a lackey, or a mendicant who asks an alms. And she shook with laughter at Yorick's pleasure in holding the gloved hand of a beautiful woman or in counting her pulse beats with the tips of his fingers. To this and similar ridicule Madame Suard replied finely in a letter to a mutual friend. "The chapters descriptive of these incidents", she said there, "certainly have little promise in them; but Sterne's merit, it seems to me, lies in his having attached an interest to details which in themselves have none whatsoever; in his having caught a thousand faint impressions, a thousand fleeting emotions which pass through the heart or the imagination of a sensitive man, and in having rendered them all in piquant phrase and image. He enlarges, so to speak, the human heart by portraying his own sensations, * * * and thereby adds to the stores of our enjoyment. * * * If

* Thayer, *Laurence Sterne in Germany*, 105.

you do not love Sterne, beware of telling me so, for I fear I should then love you less.”*

To a later period belongs the impassioned tribute of Heine, who was as sensitive as Sterne to “the great black eyes” and “pale elegiac faces” which he saw in Italy. “Laurence Sterne”, declared Heine in his enthusiasm, “is the born equal of William Shakespeare; and he, too, was nurtured by the Muses on Parnassus. But after the manner of women they quickly spoiled him with their caresses. He was the darling of the pale, tragic goddess. Once in an access of fierce tenderness, she kissed his young heart with such power, passion, and madness, that his heart began to bleed and suddenly understood all the sorrows of this world, and was filled with infinite compassion. Poor young poet heart! But the younger daughter of Mnemosyne, the rosy goddess of humour, quickly ran up to him, and took the suffering boy in her arms, and sought to cheer him with laughter and song; she gave him for playthings the comic mask and the jester’s bells, and kissed his lips soothingly, kissing upon them all her levity and mirth, all her wit and mockery.”†

* *Lettre d’une Femme sur le Voyage sentimental de Sterne*, in J. B. A. Suard’s *Mélanges de Littérature*, III, 111-122 (Paris, 1803). Frénais states his troubles over the word *sentimental* in his *Avertissement* to the *Voyage Sentimental* (Amsterdam et Paris, 1769). Likewise Bode in his *Vorbericht* to *Yoricks Empfindsame Reise* (Hamburg und Bremen, 1768).

† *Die Romantische Schule*. Bk. III, ch. III.

CHAPTER XXI

ILLNESS AND DEATH

MARCH 1768

BUT Sterne never lived to enjoy to the full his final triumph. The last time we see him afoot is on a Sunday, late in February. He was to breakfast with Beauclerk, the friend of Dr. Johnson, and pass an hour afterwards with Lord Ossory. In the evening he was to dine along with Selwyn with their friends in Gerrard Street. Mrs. James, he had discovered, possessed a talent for drawing. "I presented her last year", he wrote to Selwyn ten days before, "with colours, and an apparatus for painting, and gave her several lessons before I left town.—I wish her to follow this art, to be a compleat mistress of it—and it is singular enough, but not more singular than true, that she does not know how to make a cow or a sheep, tho' she draws figures and landscapes perfectly well." All this was a pretty introduction to a request that Selwyn bring with him an Italian print or two from his collection of "cattle on colour'd paper" for Mrs. James to copy. The two men planned to go over to Gerrard Street half an hour before dinner to see a picture of Mrs. James just "executed by West, most admirably". "He has caught", said Sterne in concluding his letter to Selwyn, "the character of our friend—such goodness is painted in that face, that when one looks at it, let the soul be ever so much un-harmonized, it is impossible it should remain so.—I will send you a set of my books—they will take with the generality—the women will read this book in the parlour, and Tristram in the bed-chamber.—Good night, dear sir—I am going to take my whey, and then to bed."

The Sunday evening at Mrs. James's was the last of the thousand dinners which had attended Yorick in his fame.

The same week he came down with the winter's influenza, which he had thus far escaped, notwithstanding his weakened condition. During his illness, friendly visitors again called at his lodgings, but he was unable to maintain his old buoyancy of spirit, as may be seen from his last letter to his daughter near the beginning of March. Mrs. Sterne, who was still ailing, feared that she was going to die and leave Lydia in the hands of a father who would send her out to India as a companion to Mrs. Draper. On hearing from Lydia of his wife's delusion, Sterne wrote back that he never had such a design, that in case his daughter should lose her mother, Mrs. James would become her protector. The disrespectful reference to Mrs. Draper in the letter now to be quoted, was doubtless edited in by Lydia according to her custom as we know it from extant originals. Sterne's last pathetic letter to his daughter, in the form she printed it, ran as follows:

“My dearest Lydia,—My Sentimental Journey, you say, is admired in York by everyone—and 'tis not vanity in me to tell you that it is no less admired here—but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion?—the want of health bows me down, and vanity harbours not in thy father's breast—this vile influenza—be not alarm'd, I think I shall get the better of it—and shall be with you both the first of May, and if I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child—unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.—The subject of thy letter has astonish'd me.—She could but know little of my feelings, to tell thee, that under the supposition I should survive thy mother, I should bequeath thee as a legacy to Mrs. Draper. No, my Lydia! 'tis a lady, whose virtues I wish thee to imitate, that I shall entrust my girl to—I mean that friend whom I have so often talk'd and wrote about—from her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend—and you cannot be intimate with her, without her pouring some part of the milk of human kindness into your breast, which will serve to check the heat of your own temper, which you partake in a small degree of.—Nor will that amiable woman put my Lydia under the painful neces-

sity to fly to India for protection, whilst it is in her power to grant her a more powerful one in England.—But I think, my Lydia, that thy mother will survive me—do not deject her spirits with thy apprehensions on my account.—I have sent you a necklace, buckles, and the same to your mother.—My girl cannot form a wish that is in the power of her father, that he will not gratify her in—and I cannot in justice be less kind to thy mother.—I am never alone —The kindness of my friends is ever the same—I wish tho' I had thee to nurse me—but I am deny'd that.—Write to me twice a week, at least.—God bless thee, my child, and believe me ever, ever thy affectionate father, L. S.”

Influenza prepared the way for pleurisy, which set in during the second week of March; and despite all that could be done for him, the patient grew worse from day to day. On Tuesday the fifteenth, feeling the approach of death, he took his farewell of the world in a noble and tender letter to Mrs. James, asking her to look to the welfare of Lydia and pleading for pardon for the many follies which had pained his best friends:

“Your poor friend is scarce able to write—he has been at death’s door this week with a pleurisy—I was bled three times on Thursday, and blister’d on Friday—The physician says I am better—God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while of gaining strength.—Before I have gone thro’ half this letter, I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times.—Mr. James was so good to call upon me yesterday. I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him, and he overjoy’d me by talking a great deal of you.—Do, dear Mrs. James, entreat him to come to-morrow, or next day, for perhaps I have not many days, or hours, to live—I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself worse—that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror—my spirits are fled—’tis a bad omen—do not weep my dear Lady—your tears are too precious to shed for me—bottle them up, and may the cork never be drawn.—Dearest, kindest, gentlest, and best of women! may health, peace, and happiness prove your

handmaids.—If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemn'd—which my heart, not my head, betray'd me into. Should my child, my Lydia want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom?—You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action.—I wrote to her a fortnight ago, and told her what I trust she will find in you.—Mr. James will be a father to her—he will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence—Commend me to him—as I now commend you to that Being who takes under his care the good and kind part of the world.—Adieu—all grateful thanks to you and Mr. James. Your poor affectionate friend, L. Sterne.”

Sterne lingered on in the full possession of his faculties for three days more. Death came at four o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, March 18, 1768.*

Around the closing scenes in his Bond Street lodgings has grown up a legend, starting from a fact or two, to show that a life of pleasure, as in the case of the *Rake's Progress*, must end in lonely bitterness. “The celebrated writer Sterne”, said Malone in repeating what he had heard in his youth, “after being the idol of this town, died in a mean lodging without a single friend who felt interest in his fate except Becket, his bookseller.” A little while before his death, according to other parts of the story, Sterne complained like Falstaff of cold in his feet; whereupon one attendant chafed them while another plucked out his gold sleeve-buttons. The next day his landlady, to be sure of her rent, sold his body, Allan Cunningham heard, to dissectors.† It is quite easy to

* *St. James's Chronicle*, March 17-19.

† For stories concerning Sterne's death, see Prior, *Life of Malone*, 373-74 (London, 1860); Leslie and Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, I, 293 (London, 1865); Cunningham, biographical sketch of Reynolds in *Lives of Eminent Painters* edited by W. Sharpe (London, 1886); John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne*, II, 42 (London, 1812); *Notes and Queries*, fifth series, VIII, 249. Cunningham has an amusing story. “The death of Sterne,” he relates, “is said to have been hastened by the sarcastic raillery of a lady whom he encountered at the painter's [Reynolds] table. He offended her by the grossness of his conversation, and, being in a declining state of health, suffered * * * so severely from her wit—that he went home and died.”

dispose of most of the legend. The "mean lodging" was a suite of apartments in the most fashionable quarter of the city, where Sterne was accustomed to receive every morning men of the first rank. As his last illness was coming upon him, he wrote to Lydia in the letter already quoted: "I am never alone—the kindness of my friends is ever the same." Sir Joshua Reynolds had an appointment with him on the twenty-second of February and again on the first of March.* This kindly anxiety, it is safe to infer, continued till the end. Commodore James, we know, called on Monday the fourteenth, and most likely on the succeeding Thursday. If visitors dropped away during the week, it was only because Sterne was too ill to see them. On the first signs of pleurisy, a physician, doubtless his "friend" of last year, was summoned to bleed and blister in accordance with the usual practice, and a nurse was placed in watch over the patient. That Molly the house-maid, a cherished servant, who packed and unpacked Sterne's luggage and served his meals through two seasons, robbed him of sleeve-buttons or other trinkets while death was creeping upon him, may be believed by readers who know nothing of the kindly attachment that ever existed between Sterne and those who served him. "The poor girl", Sterne wrote in his journal the year before, "is bewitch'd with us." His landlady appears to have been brusque of speech, but there is no evidence that she was a ghoul. If Sterne was in arrears for his rent, we may be certain that Becket discharged the obligation out of the proceeds of the *Sentimental Journey*, which was fast advancing to a second edition. The sick man must have known when he came up to London that the chances were against his return to Coxwold. In his death was nearly fulfilled the wish which he had expressed in *Tristram Shandy*, that he might not die in his own house, but rather in "some decent inn" away from the concern of friends, where "the few cold offices" he should want might be "purchased with a few guineas and paid me with an undisturbed and punctual attention".

Without the aid of fictitious incident to point a moral,

* Reynolds, *Pocket-Book* for 1768 (MS. at Royal Academy of Arts).

the contrast between the full life Sterne had lived and his last moments is sufficiently striking to the imagination. Had he been in health that Friday afternoon, he would have been a guest at the table of John Craufurd of Errol. Returning from Paris in January, this old friend had established himself for the season, with a French cook and a retinue of other French servants, near Sterne in Clifford Street, in the house of Sir James Gray, who was going as ambassador to Spain. On that Friday afternoon his friends were gathering for a four o'clock dinner. There were present the Duke of Roxburgh, just appointed a lord of his Majesty's bedchamber, the Earl of March, afterwards Duke of Queensberry, the Earl of Upper-Ossory, the Duke of Grafton, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Hume, and Mr. James. The conversation turned to the illness of Mr. Sterne, "a very great favourite", says the relater, "of the gentlemen's"; and on hearing how serious his illness was, Craufurd immediately sent out John Macdonald, a cadet of a ruined Highland family, then in his service, to enquire how Mr. Sterne was to-day. "I went to Mr. Sterne's lodgings", is the cadet's record from memory; "the mistress opened the door; I enquired how he did? She told me to go up to the nurse. I went into the room, and he was just a dying. I waited ten minutes; but in five he said, '*Now it is come*'. He put up his hand, as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute. The gentlemen were all very sorry, and lamented him very much."*

The news of Sterne's death passed quickly on from his friends to the public. Lady Mary Coke, as noted in her journal, heard of it that evening while playing loo at Caroline Howe's. Of the party were Horace Walpole, the Earl of Ossory, and Lord Eglinton. Lord Ossory, on coming in from Craufurd's dinner, announced the death of "the famous Dr. Sterne". "He seemed", remarked Lady Mary, "to lament him very much. Lord Eglinton said (but not in a ludicrous manner) that he had taken his '*Sentimental Journey*'."† Newspapers contained the usual death notice,

* John Macdonald, *Travels*, 146-47 (London, 1790).

† *Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, II, 215-16 (Edinburgh, 1889).

some of them adding Hamlet's lament over the skull of "poor Yorick, * * * a fellow of infinite jest". Within a week or two, verses began to circulate in newspapers and magazines on Sterne's humour and pathos. Very sprightly was a poem in which a poetaster expressed doubt as to where Yorick might now be sojourning, whether in the Elysian Fields or in the darker realms of Pluto. Taking notice of this and other illiberal pens which were meanly endeavouring to injure the reputation of Mr. Sterne, the *London Magazine* for March felt sure that "if the accusing spirit flies up to heaven's chancery with his indiscretions, it will blush to give them in", or that "the recording angel in writing them down will drop a tear upon each and wash it away forever". The news of Sterne's death, travelling abroad through the next month, reached Lessing at Hamburg. Though Lessing never met Sterne, he had been reading *Tristram Shandy* since 1763, and recommending it for enlightenment. On being told by Bode, the translator, that Yorick was dead, the great critic and dramatist made a famous remark, afterwards variously repeated to other friends. "I would have given ten years of my own life," said Lessing, "if I had been able to lengthen Sterne's by one year".* Like many other Germans, Lessing wished Sterne to live on, that he might write more lives and opinions, more sermons and more journeys, or no matter what.

Were the moralists of aftertimes to be trusted, Sterne's funeral was "as friendless as his death-bed", though the very little really known concerning it points to nothing out of the usual course. Sterne was buried on Tuesday, the twenty-second of March,† from his lodgings in Bond Street, then within the parish of St. George's Church, Hanover Square. Whether few or many mourners came for a last look at Yorick in his death there is no record. All one can say about it is that the service was conducted, according to John Croft, by the chaplain of the late Prince of Wales, who took charge of Sterne's personal effects and burned, as was then

* Bode, *Vorbericht* to his translation of the *Sentimental Journey*; and Thayer, *Laurence Sterne in Germany*, 40 (New York, 1905).

† Parish Registry, St. George's, Hanover Square.

customary, his "loose papers".* The interment was, we may well believe, as was said twelve years afterwards, "most private";† for the burial-ground belonging to the fashionable church in Hanover Square lay far out Oxford Street on the Bayswater Road, over against the broad expanse of Hyde Park. It was a new ground which had been enclosed and consecrated only four years before, with a small mortuary chapel at the entrance. Among the few "gentlemen" who, tradition says, attended Sterne's body through the chapel, named the Ascension, on to his grave by the west wall, were certainly Becket and Commodore James. The record closes with the entry which the sexton made in his book, that sixteen shillings and sixpence—a rather large sum—was paid for prayers at the chapel and for the candle kept burning previous to interment.

The appropriate resting place for Sterne's body would have been the beautiful church at Coxwold by Shandy Hall. But none of his Yorkshire friends, who might have borne the trouble and expense of removal, were in London at the time of his death. Hall-Stevenson had returned to Skelton, and Lord Fauconberg remained at his country-seat through the winter. The group of London gentlemen who took charge of his funeral knew little or nothing of his associations in the north. Since Sterne died in the parish of St. George's, the burial-ground attached to that church must have appeared to them the most natural place for his interment. And yet they should have considered the danger attending burial in the suburbs at a time when dissecting-tables were furnished, without any scruple on the part of anatomists, from remote grave-yards. They should have known, if they read the newspapers, that for some time before Sterne's death the resurrection men had been at work on the Bayswater Road and in the neighbouring parish of Marylebone. In the hope of putting an end to the sacrilege, the wardens of St. George's placed over their ground a watch with a large mastiff dog; but in spite of this precaution, a corpse was

* *Whitefoord Papers*, 230.

† *Memoirs* prefixed to the collected edition of Sterne's works (London, 1780).

stolen on a Sunday in the preceding November, while the watch was asleep; and the very dog was carried off with the burden.* It is charitable to suppose that this warning in the newspapers had escaped the notice of those friends who conveyed Sterne to his last legal settlement.

However that may be, they were soon to hear, with "great concern and astonishment", that Sterne had gone to the dissecting-table. As the story was told to Hall-Stevenson when he came up to London the next winter, "the body of Mr. Sterne, who was buried near Mary[le]bone, was taken up some time after his interment, and is supposed to have been carried to Oxford, and anatomised by an eminent surgeon of that city".† Besides the mistake in the place of burial, Hall-Stevenson seems also to have been misinformed as to the exact disposition of the body. For Oxford the more carefully elaborated story has Cambridge. To give all the gruesome details of the narrative then current, Sterne's body was stolen from his grave by resurrectionists on the night of Wednesday or Thursday following the interment, and carried the next day in a case to Cambridge, where it was sold to "the anatomical professor" of the university, since identified as Dr. Charles Collignon, "an ingenious, honest man", much skilled in his art. To mitigate the horror of the crime, it is said that none involved in the robbery knew that the body was Sterne's. The discovery came about by mere accident. The professor of anatomy invited two friends to view the dissection of a nameless corpse which had just arrived from London. The work was nearly over when one of them out of curiosity uncovered the face of the dead man and recognised the features of Sterne, whom he had known and associated with not long ago. The poor visitor fainted at the sight, and Professor Collignon, on learning what a famous man lay under his scalpel, took care to retain the skeleton, which "the Rev. Thomas Greene"—presumably the Dean of Salisbury—claimed to have seen at Cambridge a few years after. Since the opening of the nineteenth cen-

* *St. James's Chronicle*, Nov. 24-26, 1767.

† Hall-Stevenson, Preface to *Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued* (second edition, London, 1769).

tury, various attempts have been made to identify Sterne's skull in the collection at Cambridge, but they have all been fruitless. The tradition has nevertheless persisted among Dr. Collignon's successors down to Dr. Alexander Macalister, who now holds the professorship, that Sterne's skull once reposed in the Anatomical Museum of the university.

The ghastly tale in the form recently told anew by Professor Macalister may be accepted as essentially true.* Not only is it probable when we consider the place and circumstances of Sterne's burial; but it also rests upon good authority, partly upon the statement of Hall-Stevenson, who was Sterne's most intimate friend, and partly upon that of Malone, who received the account of Sterne's dismal fate directly from one of the gentlemen who was present at the dissection. Of less weight, though worthy of regard, is an old manuscript note at the end of a copy of the first edition of the *Sentimental Journey*, wherein the writer says that the story was confirmed by Dr. Collignon. Certainly it was very generally believed in after years that Sterne's sojourn was brief on the Bayswater Road. In consequence of this and other desecrations of the dead, St. George's burial-ground fell into great ill-repute. Overgrown with nettles and weeds, it was for a long time among the most neglected grave-yards in all London; shunned by everybody out of instinctive feelings of horror, it was a spot where no one, if he could help it, ever permitted his friends to be buried. And so it became a place where the poor might be huddled into their graves. Since those days all has changed: the metropolis has spread her protecting wings far beyond Hyde Park; and the old abandoned cemetery by the great Marble Arch, long since closed against the dead, appears as a quiet spot in the midst of a throbbing life.† But as a fitting symbol of the Gothic fears which it formerly inspired, lie some distance from where Sterne was buried the bones of Ann Radcliffe, the once popular romancer of crime and death.

As evidence of final and complete neglect, it has been

* Macalister, *History of the Study of Anatomy in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1891). See also Willis's *Current Notes*, April, 1854, for a summary of the evidence.

† Cecil Moore, *Brief History of St. George's Chapel* (London, 1883).

many times repeated that neither Sterne's friends nor his family cared enough for his memory to mark his grave. The assertion in this form is quite untrue, for none knew Sterne well but to hold him at least in pleasant remembrance; and a stone was in fact projected, for which Garrick wrote the brief epitaph,—

“Shall Pride a heap of sculptur'd marble raise,
Some worthless, unmourn'd titled fool to praise;
And shall we not by one poor grave-stone learn
Where Genius, Wit, and Humour, sleep with *Sterne?*”—

which Lydia, in the warmth of her heart, thought a “sweet” tribute to her father from one who “loved the man” as well as “admired his works”. The project was abandoned, not because of indifference nor of a desire to leave Sterne undistinguished among the dead, but most likely because, in the belief of many, and perhaps on positive assurance from Cambridge, his body no longer reposed in St. George's parish. In succeeding years the want of a memorial to an author whom scores of pens were lauding in verse and prose was not understood by men unacquainted with rumours no longer in active currency. So it happened that Sterne was finally indebted for a headstone, sometime near 1780, to two free-masons, who had read Sterne's books, but had never seen the man. Their inscription, summarising Sterne's literary career and attributing to him all the virtues of freemasonry, though he did not belong to the order, read as follows:

Alas! Poor Yorick
Near to this Place
Lyes the Body of
The Reverend Laurence Sterne, A.M.
Dyed September 13th, 1768,
Aged 53 Years.



Ah! Molliter ossa quiescant!
If a sound Head, warm Heart, and Breast humane,
Unsullied Worth, and Soul without a Stain;
If mental Powers could ever justly claim

The well-won Tribute of immortal Fame,
Sterne was the *Man*, who with gigantic Stride,
Mowed down luxuriant Follies far and wide.
Yet what, though keenest Knowledge of Mankind
Unseal'd to him the Springs that move the Mind;
What did it cost him? ridicul'd, abus'd,
By Fools insulted, and by Prudes accus'd.
In his, mild Reader, view thy future Fate,
Like him despise, what 'twere a Sin to hate.

This monumental Stone was erected to the memory of the deceased, by two BROTHER MASONS; for although He did not live to be a Member of their SOCIETY, yet all his incomparable Performances evidently prove him to have acted by Rule and Square: they rejoice in this opportunity of perpetuating his high and irreproachable character to after ages.

W & S

The monument was pronounced at the time "very unworthy" of Sterne's memory, and the strangers who erected it have since been described as "tippling masons". It is quite difficult to see in the inscription anything to suggest tippling, nor does it appear on what grounds the brotherhood of masons may be called tipplers, if that be the insinuation. Why not take things as they are? The memorial was a simple slab such as the two men could easily afford; and the inscription, reflecting the bad taste of the authors and their ignorance of Sterne, was yet a sincere encomium from humble admirers of *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Sterne's grave remained for more than a century much as the brother masons left it; but fifteen years ago the owner of his uncle Richard's seat near Halifax corrected the obvious mistakes in age and date of death on the headstone, and erected a footstone having the more appropriate inscription:

In
 Memory of
 The Rev^d Laurence Sterne, M.A.
 Rector of Coxwold, Yorkshire,
 Born November 24, 1713.
 Died March 18, 1768.

The Celebrated Author
 of
 "Tristram Shandy"
 and
 "The Sentimental Journey"
 Works unsurpassed in the English language,
 For a Richness of Humour and a pathetic sympathy
 Which will ever render the Name of their Author
 Immortal.

"Requiescat in pace."
 The Headstone to this grave
 Was Cleaned and Restored, by the owner of the "Sterne"
 Property,
 At Woodhall, near Halifax, in the County of York,
 Who also erected the foot and border stones
 In the Year
 1893.

As if Sterne's death had been expected in the north, his Yorkshire parishes and the prebendal stall which he held in St. Peter's, were immediately filled by men who were waiting for them. On March 25, or within three or four days after the news of Sterne's death could have reached York, the Rev. Andrew Cheap was collated to Sutton-on-the-Forest, and Dr. William Worthington to the canonry and prebend of North Newbald. Two weeks afterwards Lord Fauconberg nominated the Rev. Thomas Newton to Coxwold, and the Archbishop of York signed the license on the nineteenth of April.* Into these transactions one might read unusual haste, were it not that ecclesiastical business of this kind was always quickly

* *Institutions* of the Diocese of York, and *York Courant*, April 5, 1768.

despatched at York and elsewhere in the old days. None of Sterne's successors, family, or friends, as has been often remarked, placed a mural tablet to his memory at Coxwold or at Sutton. This neglect, at first sight rather strange, is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that he died out of his parishes. Where the body lies should be the monument, was then the rule.

Shandy Hall by the roadside beyond the church at Coxwold, apparently never again used as the parsonage, was occupied for a time by a local surgeon, who let it fall into disrepair. After his death, its owner, Sir George Wombwell of Newburgh Priory, a descendant of Lord Fauconberg, turned the old rambling house into labourers' tenements, blocking up in the process inner passages and turning two of the lead-pane windows into outer doorways. Fortunately the desecrating hand barely touched Sterne's study with its great yawning fireplace; and in amends for the past, a bronze tablet has since been placed by the gateway, saying to all travellers:

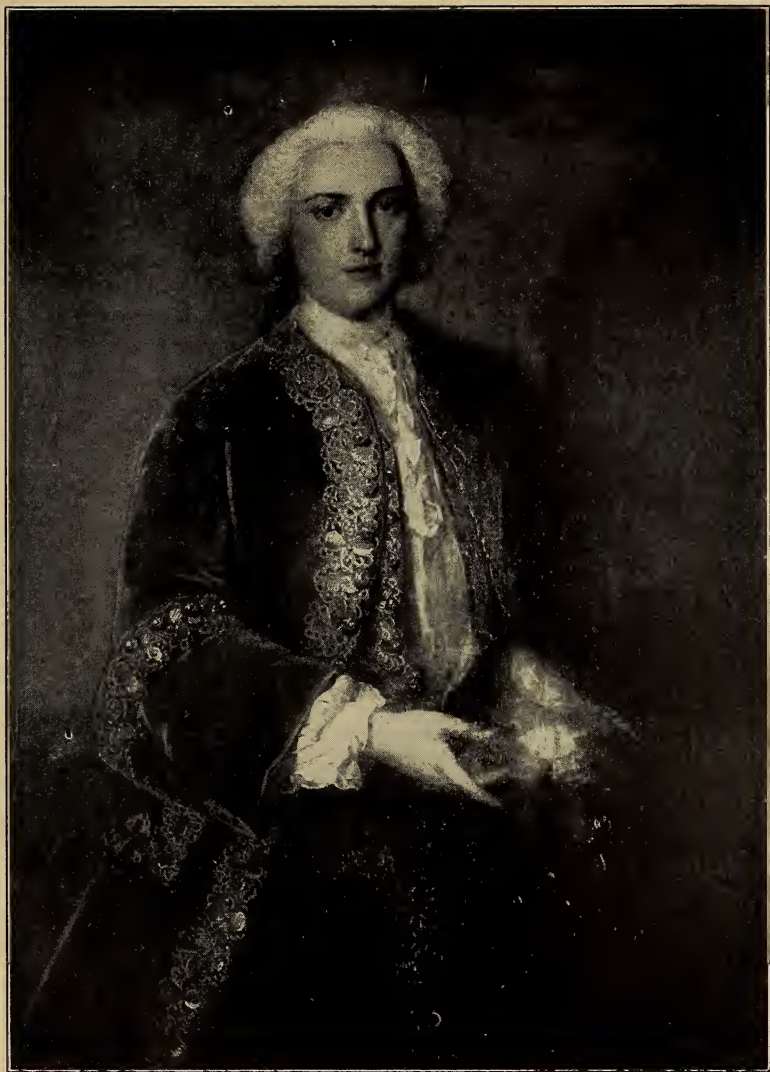
Shandy Hall
Here dwelt Laurence Sterne
Many Years incumbent
of Coxwold.
Here he wrote *Tristram Shandy*
And the *Sentimental Journey*.
Died in London in 1768
Aged 55 Years

Thus little by little the author of *Tristram Shandy* has been accorded those slight emblems of fame which untoward circumstances rather than anything else denied him immediately after death. Once or twice Sterne expressed a wish that, should he die at home, his body might be laid by the side of his great-grandfather, the archbishop, in the cathedral at York. Although hardly hoping for this honour, he seems to have expected that a marble replica of the Nollekens bust would sometime be placed to his memory near the tomb of his most distinguished ancestor.

CHAPTER XXII

LYDIA AND HER MOTHER. POSTHUMOUS SERMONS AND LETTERS

No will was found among Sterne's papers. On the fourth of June following his death, letters for the administration of his goods were granted the widow in the Prerogative Court of York, which was still presided over by Francis Topham, the meddler whom Sterne had silenced in the *History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*. Mrs. Sterne's sureties on the customary bond entered at the same time were two friends of the family, Arthur Ricard, father and son, attorneys at York. The document was signed and sealed in the presence of Robert Jubb the notary, another of their friends. As indicative of the valuation placed upon Sterne's effects, the sureties jointly bound themselves to the sum of £500. No inventory of goods was ever exhibited for comparison with this valuation, but the estimate was nearly correct. Indeed, Sterne's personal effects had already been sold, and all claims upon his estate had been called in by Mr. Ricard the senior, to whom Mrs. Sterne delegated the details of administration. Thus, without strict legal authority, an auction was held out at Shandy Hall, on April 14, for the sale of "all the household goods and furniture of the late Mr. Sterne, * * * with a cow, * * * a parcel of hay, a handsome post-chaise with a pair of exceeding good horses, and a compleat set of coloured table-china". To tempt purchasers, the china was placed on exhibition at a shop in York, and the horses at Bluitt's Inn in Lendal Street, whence the fastest post-chaises set out for London. Sterne's books, including the lot which he had purchased "dirt cheap" a few years before, were sold to Todd and Sotheran at the sign of the Golden Bible in Stone-



John Hall-Stevenson
From a painting at Skelton Castle

gate, in whose catalogue for 1768 they were advertised to the public. From all these sales was realised about £400.*

Against these assets were debts, Lydia wrote to Wilkes, amounting to £1100, which must have been the slow accumulation of several years. According to Sterne's account-book, which came under the eye of John Croft, the author received "£1500 of Dodsley at different times for his publications"; and Becket should have paid him quite as much more. The £3000 had all gone in visits to London, in foreign travel, and in the maintenance of wife and daughter abroad. Had the Sternes been good economists, their income from various sources might have proved adequate for their new mode of living, but they were all improvident. Ever since their first sojourn in France, the head of the family had been borrowing small sums from this or that acquaintance—ten, twenty, or fifty pounds here and there—and binding therefor the whole Shandy household until the appearance of a forthcoming instalment of his book. The *Sentimental Journey*, Sterne had hoped, would put him even with the world and enable him, after the sale of his real estate, to make permanent provision for his family. In the midst of these expectations Sterne died, and the day of reckoning with his creditors was at hand for his widow. Wishing to avoid the disgrace of insolvency, Mrs. Sterne "nobly engaged" to pay off little by little all of her husband's debts out of the rent of the lands at Sutton and her own private estate, yielding £40 a year. At this juncture Hall-Stevenson came to the rescue of the "unhappy widow" by raising a handsome subscription for her and Lydia at the York races in the following August, said to have amounted to eight hundred or a thousand guineas.†

Through this generous aid of friends, all of Sterne's personal debts seem to have been promptly liquidated. There

* The auction at Shandy Hall was advertised in the *York Courant*, April 12, 1768. Among Sterne's books which went to Todd and Sotheran were Béroalde's *Moyen de Parvenir*, Bouchet's *Serées*, and Bruscamille's *Pensées Facétieuses*.—See Willis's *Current Notes*, April, 1854.

† For these and other details, see Lydia's letters to Wilkes and Hall-Stevenson in J. Almon, *The Correspondence of the late John Wilkes*, V, 7-20 (London, 1805). See also *Whitefoord Papers*, 230-31; and *Memoirs* prefixed to Sterne's *Works* (Dublin, 1779).

was, however, one claim against his estate which the widow stoutly resisted on the advice of her attorneys. The parsonage-house at Sutton, which burned to the ground several years before, still lay in ashes, though Sterne "had been frequently admonished and required to rebuild" it. As vicar of the parish, Sterne was liable for any impairment to the value of the living during his incumbency. But in this case were two extenuating circumstances which might be pleaded against strict enforcement of the law. The house had been set on fire while Sterne was not in residence—by a careless curate or by some one else within his gates, from whom it was impossible to recover damages. Again, the house in ashes was not much worse than the house in ruins, such as Sterne found it when he entered upon the living at an expense for repairs which staggered him. Certainly it was not quite just to ask him to build anew to the impoverishment of his estate. Arguing in this way, Sterne easily found means for evading what some thought the performance of an obvious duty to his parish. At his death came the crisis. His successor, the Rev. Mr. Cheap, after vainly trying persuasion with Mrs. Sterne, instituted a suit against her for dilapidations; whereupon, in order to escape the payment of damages, she was compelled to pocket her pride and make an oath of insolvency. Thus in danger of recovering nothing, the Rev. Mr. Cheap accepted from Mrs. Sterne £60 in satisfaction for the claim. All this was afterwards recorded by the angry vicar in the parish registry of Sutton in company with his impressions of the Shandy household, and with the statement that the cost of the suit and of rebuilding reached the sum of £576. 13s. 5d.

After the settlement of Sterne's estate, Mrs. Sterne and Lydia went into lodgings at York for the winter, with the intention of passing over to a secluded life in France, as soon as some slight provision might be made for the future beyond their small rents and the forty pounds per annum long in Mrs. Sterne's own right. Among Sterne's effects upon which an appraiser would have placed no value, were his manuscripts, consisting of copies or drafts of letters, fragments or passages cast aside in the final revision of *Tristram Shandy*,

notes and suggestions for the continuation of the *Sentimental Journey*, and an odd lot of eighteen sermons, which the author had rejected in making up his previous volumes for publication. Of such manuscripts as have survived, the letters are particularly interesting. Clearly anticipating their publication after his death, Sterne copied out many letters which had passed between himself and friends into a letter-book, prefaced with the following information for his wife and daughter: "Fothergil I know has some good ones—Garriick some—Berenger has one or two—Gov. Littleton's Lady (Miss Macartney) numbers—Countess of Edgecomb—Mrs. Moore of Bath—Mrs. Fenton, London—*cum multis aliis*. These all, if collected, with the large number of mine and friends in my possession would print and sell to good account. Hall has by him a great number, [which] with those in this book and in my Bureau—and those above—would make four vols. the size of Shandy—they would sell well—and produce 800 pds. at the least."* The letters and all of Sterne's papers were carefully examined by his survivors with a view to profit rather than to the enhancement of his fame. Such as appeared to be of no consequence Mrs. Sterne left at Shandy Hall, where, it has been said, they were used by the new incumbent as a lining for wall-paper in redecorating one of the rooms. The letters and a few fragments were preserved for subsequent consideration. The sermons it was decided to bring out the next season under the patronage of Sterne's friends.

Many local subscribers sent in their names through the winter; and then in the spring Mrs. Sterne and Lydia started for London to complete the list on the way to France. While in town, they lodged with a "Mr. Williams, paper-merchant",† in Gerrard Street near the Jameses, who showed them every courtesy and kindness. Through the Jameses or on their own initiative, they met scores of Sterne's London acquaintances, to whom they told their melancholy story, and gained thereby the coveted subscriptions. In this business,

* Some leaves of this old letter-book form a part of the Sterne Manuscripts owned by J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq.

† The address is given in Wilkes's *List of Addresses* (British Museum, *Additional MSS.*, 30892).

Lydia, who figured as the type of beauty in distress, took the leading part. Adopting the style and manner of her father, she sat in her lodgings despatching requests about town for aid in obtaining subscriptions, or for permission to visit her father's more influential friends in order to make a personal plea in the interest of her mother. "Mrs. and Miss Sterne's compliments", began a formal note in Lydia's hand to John Wilkes, then in the King's Bench prison awaiting trial, "wait on Mr. Wilkes. They intend doing themselves the pleasure of calling upon him, if not disagreeable; and would be obliged to him if he would appoint an hour when he will not be engaged. They would not intrude; yet should be happy to see a person whom they honour, and whom Mr. Sterne justly admired. They will, when they see Mr. Wilkes, entreat him to ask some of his friends to subscribe to three volumes of Mr. Sterne's Sermons, which they are now publishing." After detailing the facts in regard to Sterne's large debts, the letter continued: "We have sold the copyright for a trifle; our greatest hopes are, that we may have a good many subscribers. Several of our friends have used their interest in our behalf. The simple story of our situation will, I doubt not, engage Mr. Wilkes to do what he can." On these and similar appeals the number of subscribers was brought up to seven hundred and twenty-nine, a larger, though not more distinguished, list than any that had appeared before Sterne's books during his lifetime.

In negotiating with the publishers, Lydia came perilously near sharp practice. As first planned, the sermons were to go to Becket, who made a liberal offer for the copyright; but as the day of publication approached, he demanded a year's credit and otherwise assumed arbitrary airs, to the great annoyance of the widow and daughter, who stood in need of money to take them into France. Thereupon Lydia, resolving to sell the copyright to the highest bidder, sent Becket's final terms to William Strahan, a rival publisher in the Strand, along with the following letter as yet unpublished:

"I enclose you Mr. Beckett's proposal—when he last offer'd £400 for the copyright he insisted on no such terms

as these——this affair of not offering them to anyone else must be managed with the greatest caution—for you see he says that he will not take them if offer'd elsewhere. He will be judge of the quantity and quality——and insists on a year's credit. All these points my mother and myself most earnestly desire you to consider.——Unless you could be pretty sure of getting us more than £400, the offering them might perhaps come to Becket's knowledge——yet believe me, Sir, we had rather anyone had them than Becket——he is a *dirty fellow*."

In the end was effected some sort of compromise, whereby Mrs. Sterne and Lydia doubtless received £400 in cash for the first edition and for the copyright, which was purchased by a small syndicate of publishers formed by Strahan, Cadell, and Becket. Under their joint auspices appeared, near the first of June, 1769, "Sermons by the late Rev. Mr. Sterne", comprising volumes five, six, and seven of the complete issue. Subscribers' books, it was announced in the newspapers, would be delivered by Becket. The price of the set was 7s. 6d.

Fearing this posthumous collection of miscellaneous sermons, Sterne humorously described them three years before as "the sweepings of the Author's study after his death". At that time, to judge from the extant manuscript* of the sermon on the "Temporal Advantages of Religion", written all over with corrections, he considered the publication of sermons contained in these volumes, revising, curtailing, and adding to them; but rightly decided after a little thought that they had better be kept from the light, for they were mostly ordinary parish homilies, good enough for the nonce, but altogether too commonplace for an audience that should include the nobility and gentry of the kingdom. And beyond this, the sermons abounded in repetitions, not only of thought but of phrase and sentence, sometimes to the extent of a paragraph or more. Half of the sermon entitled the "Thirtieth of January", to cite an extreme instance, on the "great trespass" of our forefathers in putting to death Charles the First, was taken bodily over into "The Ingratitude of

* Now in the private library of Mr. W. K. Bixby, of St. Louis.

Israel''. Among these sermons, occurs, too, the most flagrant act of plagiarism that has ever been charged against Sterne. In 1697, Walter Leightonhouse, late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, and then Prebendary of Lincoln, published twelve sermons which he had preached in his cathedral. It was a volume of rather mediocre sermons by a rather obscure clergyman, which Sterne freely appropriated on urgent occasions when a sermon must be prepared on short notice. How closely Sterne followed Leightonhouse may be seen by comparing the two preachers on the text "Put thou thy trust in the Lord".

The Prebendary of Lincoln began:

"He that soberly sits down, and considers the State and Condition of Man; how that *he is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards*, shall find his Life perpetually surrounded with so many sorrowful Changes and Vicissitudes, that 'twill be matter of the greatest Wonder, how *the Spirit of Man could bear the Infirmities of Nature*, and carry him through the Disappointments of this Valley of Tears. And indeed, had not the frame of our Constitution, and the Contexture of our Minds been curiously contrived by the Hand of an All-Wise Being; did not the Faculties of our upper Region greatly support our tottering building of Clay, 'tis impossible but *the day of our Birth*, would appear to be our greatest Misfortune, and the silent Grave be earnestly sought, and desired by each thinking son of *Adam*."

The opening passage by the Prebendary of Lincoln was thus ably paraphrased and expanded by the Prebendary of York:

"Whoever seriously reflects upon the state and condition of man, and looks upon that dark side of it, which represents his life as open to so many causes of trouble;—when he sees how often he eats the bread of affliction, and that he is born to it as naturally as the sparks fly upwards;—that no rank or degrees of men are exempted from this law of our beings;—but that all, from the high cedar of Libanus to the humble shrub upon the wall, are shook in their turns by numberless calamities and distresses:—when one sits down and looks upon this gloomy side of things, with all the sor-

rowful changes and chances which surround us,—at first sight,—would not one wonder,—how the spirit of man could bear the infirmities of his nature, and what it is that supports him, as it does, under the many evil accidents which he meets with in his passage through the valley of tears?—Without some certain aid within us to bear us up,—so tender a frame as ours would be but ill fitted to encounter what generally befalls it in this rugged journey:—and accordingly we find,—that we are so curiously wrought by an all-wise hand, with a view to this,—that, in the very composition and texture of our nature, there is a remedy and provision left against most of the evils we suffer;—we being so ordered,—that the principle of self-love, given us for preservation, comes in here to our aid,—by opening a door of hope, and, in the worst emergencies, flattering us with a belief that we shall extricate ourselves, and live to see better days.—”

The Prebendary of Lincoln, in closing, said :

“And although the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the Vine; although the Labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no Meat; although the Flock should be cut off from the Fold, and there should be no Herd in the Stall; yet let us rejoice in the Lord, let us joy in the God of our Salvation.”

And the Prebendary of York, by this time weary of his task, copied out his brother nearly word for word :

*“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines;—although the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;—although the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet we will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation.—”**

These are but examples of the manner in which Sterne revamped old sermons, whether written by himself or by others, in the business of his parish. A sermon entitled “Evil”, to pursue the subject further, closes with a passage

* For this comparison, see Sterne’s thirty-fourth sermon, and Leightonhouse’s twelfth sermon in *Twelve Sermons preached at the Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (London, 1697). See also *Habakkuk*, 3, 17-18.

from a sermon on the "Advantages of Christianity"; and across the manuscript of sermon forty-four, justifying the ways of Providence to man, Sterne wrote that it was mostly borrowed from Wollaston. Still other sermons, like "Penances" and "On Enthusiasm", whether original or not in their phrasing, merely reflect the violent hatred against the Church of Rome prevalent in '45, a phase of passion through which Sterne had long since passed. And it seems almost impossible that a sermon could ever have come from Yorick's pen so tame and lifeless as the one on the "Sanctity of the Apostles".

In compensation for these inanities, Sterne is still visible here and there at his very best. It is Sterne the humourist who, on rising into the pulpit, reads two texts for the sermon on "Evil"—one from St. Paul and one from Solomon—and then, looking over his congregation, says: "Take either as you like it, you will get nothing by the bargain." Again it is Sterne the eloquent preacher who draws a portrait of the young George the Third under the guise of Asa, the peaceful king, who received his sceptre from the warlike Abijah. "His experience told him", says the preacher weightily of the young king, "that the most successful wars, instead of invigorating, more generally drained away the vitals of government,—and, at the best, ended but in a brighter and more ostentatious kind of poverty and desolation:—therefore he laid aside his sword, and studied the arts of ruling Judah with peace.—Conscience would not suffer Asa to sacrifice his subjects to private views of ambition, and wisdom forbade he should suffer them to offer up themselves to the pretence of public ones;—since enlargement of empire, by the destruction of its people (the natural and only valuable source of strength and riches), was a dishonest and miserable exchange.—And however well the glory of a conquest might appear in the eyes of a common beholder, yet, when bought at that costly rate, a father to his country would behold the triumphs which attended it, and weep, as it passed by him."

Finally, monotonies over "the degeneracy of the times" or "the wickedness of the world" are relieved by Sterne's

descriptions of high life as he had seen it, wherein religion has become "a standing jest to enliven discourse when conversation sickens", and wherein are admitted men however infamous their character, and women however abandoned, "to be courted, caressed, and flattered", always without question, if they can pay for it. These fashionable people, among whom a man of sobriety and temperance steers his course with difficulty, were exhorted in another sermon to search the Scriptures, if not for moral improvement, at least for æsthetic enjoyment. "There are two sorts of eloquence", the preacher told them; "the one indeed scarce deserves the name of it, which consists chiefly in laboured and polished periods, an over-curious and artificial arrangement of figures, tinsell'd over with a gaudy embellishment of words, which glitter, but convey little or no light to the understanding. * * * It is a vain and boyish eloquence; and as it has always been esteemed below the great geniuses of all ages, so much more so, with respect to those writers who were actuated by the spirit of infinite wisdom, and therefore wrote with that force and majesty with which never man writ.—The other sort of eloquence is quite the reverse to this, and which may be said to be the true characteristic of the holy Scriptures; where the excellence does not arise from a laboured and far-fetched elocution, but from a surprising mixture of simplicity and majesty, which is a double character, so difficult to be united, that it is seldom to be met with in compositions merely human." These two types of eloquence Sterne then proceeded to illustrate in a running parallel between great passages in Greek and Hebrew literature. If in the end he did not exactly prove the superiority of the Bible over the classical literatures, he most ably presented and defended a thesis novel to his audience. It would indeed be hard to find, as Cardinal Newman once pointed out, anything better than Sterne's on the "simplicity and majesty" of the Old Testament.*

Besides publishing the sermons, Mrs. Sterne and Lydia had other projects in mind for easing their fortune, in one of which they were anticipated by Hall-Stevenson. It is

* Sterne's forty-second sermon and Newman's *Idea of a University*.

doubtful whether they could have pieced together in any sort of narrative the notes left by Sterne towards the concluding volumes of the *Sentimental Journey*, which had been promised to subscribers at this time. Still, they must have been surprised when Eugenius appeared in London with the manuscript of *Yorick's Sentimental Journey* completed in two volumes, to which was prefixed a short memoir of Sterne, remarkable for its inaccuracies and the advertisement that the work had been based upon the "facts, events, and observations" of the last part of Mr. Sterne's travels abroad, as related to the author in the intimacy of friendship. Notwithstanding the claim, Hall-Stevenson did little more than retell the familiar incidents of the *Sentimental Journey*, everywhere vulgarising them. It was the author's plan to represent Yorick as revisiting the old scenes and describing the changes wrought by a year or two. The grisette of silken eyelashes was glad to see her old friend again and to sell him more gloves. Hearing at Moulins that Maria had just died of a broken heart, Yorick sought out her grave, that he might shed a tear upon it as a last tribute to virtue. Of the tour through Italy, for which all readers were expectant, there was no word. And yet, without serious censure, this impudent fraud upon the public easily passed current at home and on the Continent.

Another project was suggested to the Sternes by Wilkes on one of their visits to his prison. He offered to write for their benefit the authorised biography of Sterne, provided Hall-Stevenson, who had just shown his biographical skill, could be drawn into partnership with him. Widow and daughter thereupon broached the scheme to the master of Skelton, who readily consented to have his name associated with the man most talked of in England. As her part in the undertaking, Lydia was to collect and arrange her father's correspondence supplementary to the memoir, and to draw a frontispiece for each volume. At near the same time, a new edition of *Tristram Shandy* was also to be brought out in six volumes, with six illustrations—the two well-known ones by Hogarth (Trim's reading the sermon, and the baptism of Tristram), and four new ones by Lydia, of which she sub-

mitted three sentimental subjects to Wilkes for his approval: "Maria with the goat, with my father beside her"; "the sick-bed of poor Le Fevre * * * with Uncle Toby and Trim by his bedside"; and "Le Fevre's son with the picture of his mother in his hand, the cushion by his bed-side on which he has just prayed". In the meantime, Becket was to be brow-beaten, on the threat of giving the work to another publisher, into promising £400 for the "Life of Mr. Sterne" written by "two men of such genius as Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Hall".

These expectations, an observer might have seen, were doomed from the first to disappointment. Hall-Stevenson, though of the best intentions, was too indolent for the serious labours of a biographer; and Wilkes, just then the centre of the political universe, was too busy with his trial for outlawry, and with manifestoes and Middlesex elections, to employ his pen for others. Lydia had none of the talent necessary for editing her father's letters, and her amateurish drawings would have excited ridicule when brought into competition with Hogarth's masterpieces. As yet not disillusioned, Mrs. Sterne and her daughter retired for an indefinite period to Angoulême in southern France, where they resumed the genteel life of other days. "Angoulême is a pretty town", Lydia wrote to Wilkes on July 22, 1769, not long after her arrival; "the country most delightful, and from the principal walk there is a very fine prospect; a serpentine river, which joins the Garonne at Bourdeaux, has a very good effect; trees in the middle of it, which form little islands, where the inhabitants go and take the *fresco*:—in short, 'tis a most pleasing prospect; and I know no greater pleasure than sitting by the side of the river, reading Milton or Shakspeare to my mother. Sometimes I take my guitar and sing to her. Thus do the hours slide away imperceptibly; with reading, writing, drawing, and music. * * * We receive much civility from the people here. We had letters of recommendation, which I would advise every English person to procure wherever he goes in France. We have visitors, even more than we wish—as we ever found the French in general very insipid. I would rather choose to converse with people much superior

to me in understanding (that I grant I can easily do, so you need not smile)."

Already the girl had misgivings about the biography. "It is now time", the letter went on to say, "to remind Mr. Wilkes of his kind promise—to exhort him to fulfil it. If you knew, dear sir, how much we are straitened as to our income, you would not neglect it. We should be truly happy to be so much obliged to you that we may join, to our admiration of Mr. Wilkes in his public character, tears of gratitude whenever we hear his name mentioned, for the peculiar service he has rendered us. Much shall we owe to Mr. Hall for that and many other favours; but to you do we owe the kind intention which we beg you to put in practice. As I know Mr. Hall is somewhat lazy, as you were the promoter, write to him yourself: he will be more attentive to what you say." Lydia began to fear, too, that she would be unable to furnish the illustrations for the work without the assistance of a drawing-master. And the correspondence of her father, on further examination, was quite different from what she and her mother expected. "*Entre nous*", she informed Wilkes, "we neither of us wish to publish those Letters; but if we cannot do otherwise, we will, and prefix the Life to them." A note was earnestly requested from Wilkes, which should be addressed to "Mademoiselle Sterne, demoiselle Anglaise, chez Mons. Bologne, Rue Cordeliers", to advise her in her perplexities over the drawings and the letters, and to assure her that in any case Mr. Wilkes would perform his part in the undertaking.

Through the long summer into the autumn, Lydia looked every day for a reply from Wilkes which never came; while in the meantime ready money had disappeared, and all that had been placed with Panchaud was in danger of being lost by the banker's unexpected failure in July. In desperation, Lydia again wrote a pitiable letter to Wilkes, dated October 24, 1769, to remind him once more of his obligations and to hold him up to them if possible. "How long", she pleaded with him, "have I waited with impatience for a letter from Mr. Wilkes, in answer to that I wrote him above two months ago! I fear he is not well; I fear his own affairs have not

allowed him time to answer me; in short, I am full of fears. Hope deferred makes the heart sick. Three lines, with a promise of writing Tristram's Life for the benefit of his widow and daughter, would make us happy.—A promise, did I say? that I already have: but a second *assurance*. Indeed, my dear sir, since I last wrote we stand more in need of such an act of kindness. Panchaud's failure has hurt us considerably: we have, I fear, lost more than, in our circumstances, we could afford to lose. Do not, I beseech you, disappoint us: let me have a single line from you, 'I will perform my promise', and joy will take place of our sorrow. I trust you will write to Hall; in pity, do."

Near the same time, the distressed girl wrote to Hall-Stevenson in similar vein. Autumn passed and winter came on with no word from either of her father's biographers. Upon Wilkes she could intrude no further, but to Hall-Stevenson was sent a last letter, requesting the courtesy of a reply if nothing more:

"Angoulême, Feb. 13, 1770.

"Dear Sir,

"'Tis at least six months since I wrote to you on an interesting subject to us; namely, to put you in mind of a kind promise you made me, of assisting Mr. Wilkes in the scheme he had formed for our benefit, of writing the Life of Mr. Sterne. I wrote also to him; but you have neither of you favoured me with an answer. If you ever felt what 'hope deferred' occasions, you would not have put us under that painful situation. From whom the neglect arises, I know not; but surely a line from you, dear sir, would not have cost you much trouble. Tax me not with boldness for using the word *neglect*: as you both promised, out of the benevolence of your hearts, to write my father's Life for the benefit of his widow and daughter; and as I myself look upon a promise as sacred, and I doubt not but you think as I do; in that case the word is not improper. In short, dear sir, I ask but this of you; to tell me by a very short letter, whether we may depend on yours and Mr. Wilkes's promise, or if we must renounce the pleasing expectation. But, dear sir, consider

that the fulfilling of it may put £400 into our pockets; and that the declining it would be unkind, after having made us hope and depend upon that kindness. Let this plead my excuse.

“If you do not choose to take the trouble to wait on Mr. Wilkes, send him my letter, and let me know the *oui ou le non*. Still let me urge, press, and entreat Mr. Hall, to be as good as his word: if he will interest himself in our behalf, ’twill but be acting consistent with his character; ’twill prove that Eugenius was the friend of Yorick——nothing can prove it stronger than befriending his widow and daughter. Adieu, dear sir! Believe me your most obliged, humble servant, L. Sterne.

“My mother joins in best compliments.”

This letter was turned over to Wilkes in accordance with Lydia’s request; and therewith ended the project for a biography of Sterne, supplemented by his original letters and embellished with original drawings by his daughter. Throughout the transaction a reader’s sympathy at this late date rests with Lydia and her mother, who were betrayed by two affable gentlemen who broke promises as readily as they made them. On the other hand, the conduct of widow and daughter, if not exactly censurable, had been lacking in good taste and respectful consideration for Sterne’s memory. All along, their one aim had been to make the most out of his literary remains. His sermons, most of which should have been committed to the flames, had been put up at auction to the highest bidder; and the only object in now publishing his life and letters was to obtain another handsome sum. This eagerness to turn every scrap of manuscript into coin, not quite excusable on the ground of straitened circumstances, was sufficient in itself to alienate many of Sterne’s friends. Becket, merely because he asked for the credit to which he had been accustomed in Sterne’s time, was called “a dirty fellow”; and Mrs. James, as well as Wilkes and Hall-Stevenson, grew tired of tales of hard fortune reiterated to monotony. To the further discredit of the Sternes, soon came out the secret of dealings with Mrs. Draper which must be stamped as dishonourable.

Mrs. Draper, after a long but pleasant voyage, our narrative should explain, had safely reached Bombay early in 1768, "once more restored to health and strength". Her husband she found "in possession of health and a good post", and her sister Louisa, a widow after an unfortunate marriage, now in course of becoming wife to Colonel Pemble, then in command of the military forces at Bombay. "I live intirely in the Country with my dear Louisa", she wrote from High Meadow in the suburbs to her aunt Elizabeth, "bathe in the Sea daily, drink Milk, and have commenced Horsewoman". This agreeable life with a sister who had grown attractive in her widowhood, had to be given up in the autumn because of Draper's transference to Tellicherry, as chief of the factory at that station. But it so turned out that Mrs. Draper was never happier than during the first months in her new sphere, where according to the exigencies of the occasion, she played in turn the parts of "wife of a Merchant, soldier and Innkeeper, for in such different capacities", she wrote pleasantly, "is the chief of Tellicherry destined to act". And when her husband lost his two clerks, she took charge for a time of all his correspondence. This temporary position in his office she enjoyed much, she wrote home, because "it gives me consequence, and him pleasure". "The Country", to go on further with her intimate letters, "is pleasant, and healthy (a second Montpelier); our house (A Fort and property of the Company), a Magnificent one furnish'd too at our Masters expence and the allowance for supporting it Creditably, what you would term genteely, tho' it does not defray the charges of our Liqours, which alone amount to 600 a year; and such a sum, vast as it seems, is not extravagant in our situation,—for we are obliged to keep a Public Table—and six months in the Year, have a full house of shipping Gentry—that resort to us for traffic and Intelligence, from all parts of India, China, and Asia."

In these new surroundings were resumed the recreations begun with her sister at High Meadow. "I ride on Horseback daily", she informed her cousin Tom, "I bathe in the Sea, read Volumes, and fill Reams of Paper, writing scribble." To her life at Tellicherry came additional zest from

the perilous situation of the settlement at this time, for Hyder Ali and the fierce Mahrattas then held in subjection the territory about the town, and were infesting the coast as far north as Bombay, interfering with traffic on the sea and rendering unsafe passage from one station to another without a convoy. Under these circumstances, Mrs. Draper was always attended in her rides to the beach and in the neighbourhood by "a guard of six sepoy's armed with drawn Sabres and loaded Pistols", while a faithful Malabar servant followed her everywhere like a shadow. In spite of these precautions for her safety, "I was within an hour once", she wrote of Hyder Ali, "of being his Prisoner—and cannot say, but I thought it a piece of good fortune to escape that honour—tho' he has promised to treat all English Ladies well, that chearfully submit to the Laws of his Seraglio." One letter speaks of sorrow for the death of "our poor little boy" left behind in England with his sister; and there were moments in this uncertain life when she longed for the flatteries of those who told her that she was born for the stage or the salon rather than for India; but as yet Mrs. Draper was content to reign as queen of the little settlement on the Malabar Coast.

Yes: she was saying with Caesar that it was better to be first at Tellicherry than second at Bombay, where her sister now held the first place, riding "in an Ivory Pallenquin inlaid with Gold", and glittering "in Diamonds together with faring sumptuously every Day",—she was saying all this grandiloquently when news reached her out of England, from letters and from all she talked with in the Company's ships, that Mrs. Sterne was threatening to make a public scandal of her relations with Yorick by publishing their tender correspondence. There was really nothing in those sentimental relations, Mrs. Draper averred in a letter to her cousin Tom, which could not be justified, were truth and candour her judges; but an ungenerous world, she was equally aware, would read whatever it pleased into her letters should they be once published. Under the impending exposure, Mrs. Draper suffered for months keen torture, during which she denounced the whole Sterne family, not omitting Yorick him-

self, because he had flattered her into an indiscreet correspondence.

As soon, however, as she understood the reason for Mrs. Sterne's conduct, she gained her poise and acted accordingly. On receiving the news of Sterne's death, Mrs. Draper, supposing that Mrs. Sterne was also dead or "privately confined" as an insane person, had immediately sent an invitation to Lydia to come out to the East and share her own prospects as friend and companion. At this letter Mrs. Sterne became furious since it contained no reference to herself, as if she were a nonentity; and Lydia in a belated reply resented the gratuitous interference. In this mood, Lydia and her mother came up to London under the patronage of Mrs. James, who seems to have placed in their hands Mrs. Draper's letters to Sterne, discovered in his lodgings at death, together with the *Journal to Eliza*. There were also in London copies of Sterne's letters to Mrs. Draper, which Mrs. Draper herself had thoughtlessly made for some curious friend, just as she had sent one of them to her cousin Tom. These likewise seem to have come into possession of the widow and daughter. At any rate, all or the major part of the correspondence between Yorick and Eliza, it was rumoured, would appear among the original letters accompanying the biography by Wilkes and Hall-Stevenson. The truth of this rumour was subsequently confirmed either through Mrs. James or directly by Lydia, who sought to excuse herself and her mother on the score of necessity. Money must be had and the letters were now the only available source. Quick to take the hint, Mrs. Draper wrote to Mrs. James on the impulse of the moment: "O my dear Friend, for God sake, pay them all the money of mine in your Hands——would it were twice as much! the Ring too is much at Mrs. Sterne's service—as should be every thing I have in the world, rather than I would freely owe the shaddow of an obligation to her."

On the tacit if not formal understanding that her letters should be deposited with Mrs. James, Mrs. Draper promised to pay Becket whatever he might hope to profit by their publication should they be offered to him, and to make up a

generous purse for the Sternes out of India. Fulfilling the essential half of the promise, she began sending Mrs. James various small bills for the benefit of Mrs. Sterne and Lydia, which in the course of two or three years amounted to twelve hundred rupees. Half of the sum came from the contributions of acquaintances immediately surrounding her; and half was collected at her urgent request by Colonel Donald Campbell of Barbreck among his fellow officers at Bengal. As an inducement to his share in the work, Mrs. Draper drew a very flattering portrait of Lydia in one of her letters to Colonel Campbell, suggesting that he seek an introduction to Miss Sterne on his next visit to England and bring her back as his wife. And to prepare Lydia for his coming, she sent a similar portrait of the colonel to Mrs. James, saying: "He is, I think, one of ten thousand—sensible, sweet tempered, and Amiable, to a very great degree—added to which, lively, comical and accomplished—Young, Handsome, rich, and a Soldier!—What fine Girl would wish more?"*

For this happy sequel to a transaction which humiliated Mrs. Draper as much as it discredited Mrs. Sterne, Colonel Campbell arrived in England a year or more too late. Apparently in the autumn of 1770, Mrs. Sterne and Lydia left Angoulême, migrating south to Albi, a lovely brick-built town on the Tarn, not far from their old friends at Toulouse. As at Angoulême, "they were welcomed", it has been said, "to the best society" among "a quiet, pious people". This may well be true, though no letter of theirs dated at Albi has been discovered to confirm the statement. The archives of the town, however, furnish startling information in regard to Lydia. On April 28, 1772, she abjured the Protestant religion in the private chapel of the provost's house, and was thereupon admitted to the Roman Catholic Church in order to remove the last obstacle to her marriage on the same day and in the same place with a certain Jean Baptiste Alexandre de Medalle, described as only twenty years old, while Lydia was in her twenty-fifth year. The young man belonged to

* Colonel Campbell was then twenty-two years old. There is an account of him in James Douglas, *Bombay and Western India* I, 425-27 (London, 1893).

a good family, being the son of a gentleman employed in the Customs at Albi under the title of *receveur des décimes*. “*Le mariage*”, it stands written in the *Inventaire des Archives Communales d’Albi*, “*était forcé, urgent; car alors la loi autorisait la recherche de la paternité.*”^{*} Attempts have been made to explain away this extraordinary gloss on the marriage; but its meaning should be clear to all who read, as much as if it said in an Englishman’s blunt French: “*Mademoiselle Sterne était déjà à l’époque de son mariage en chemin de devenir mère.*” By one of the ironies of fate a letter was on its way from Mrs. Draper at the very time of the inauspicious marriage, recommending to Miss Sterne the favourable reception of Colonel Campbell.

Mrs. Sterne, it was stated, did not witness the scene in the provost’s chapel. Since coming into France she seems to have been relapsing into her old malady, and to have been thus spared the painful knowledge that Lydia had abjured the faith of her childhood as the only means of preserving her honour before the world. It is to be hoped that this was the case, rather than that the marriage led to an estrangement between mother and daughter and a voluntary life apart during the few months that were yet left for the mother. Sometime in the following January, Mrs. Sterne died, at the house of a physician named Lionières, at No. 9 Rue St. Antoine, within sight of the noble towers of Sainte Cécile. So ended the life of the vivacious Miss Lumley of the York Assembly Rooms, whose unhappiness began with her husband’s fame.

As a dramatic close to the career of Lydia, has grown up a story that she and her husband took an active part in the French Revolution and fell victims to the Reign of Terror. In place of this legend can be presented only a few disjointed facts, not half so striking as the conclusion to the old historical romances dealing with the French Revolution, and yet really quite as tragic as any of them. During the autumn

^{*} For the record of Lydia’s marriage, the birth of a son, and Mrs. Sterne’s death, see *Athenæum* June 18, 1870; and *Notes and Queries*, fourth series, VI, 153 and XII, 200. The search in the archives of Albi was originally made by Paul Stapfer. His account as published contains several inaccuracies which are here corrected.

after her mother's death, Mrs. Medalle, as the sole heir, disposed of all the real estate at Sutton-on-the-Forest, most likely through the squire of Stillington, who had hitherto represented the Sternes in Yorkshire. The Tindall or Dawson farm and the lands purchased of Richard Harland were conveyed by herself and husband (described in the deed as "gentleman") to the mortgagees, Dean Fountayne and Stephen Croft. The dwellings and closes which came to Sterne under the Sutton Enclosure Act were purchased in part by Thomas Proud of Newburgh and in part by Robert Wright of Claxton. All the conveyances bore as witnesses to the signatures of the Medalles, it may be of interest to note, the names of Jean François Gardes and Guierre Limory of Albi, who, we may suppose, were friends of the family.* Of Lydia's youthful husband our narrative has only one word more. He died a year and some months later, leaving with his widow a son born soon after the marriage.

Mrs. Medalle now took up again her father's correspondence, the publication of which had been deferred rather than abandoned on the withdrawal of Wilkes and Hall-Stevenson from the undertaking. For performing the labour alone she received much encouragement from the attitude of the public, which was absorbing every year sentimental tales and journeys put out in imitation of the original, while an anecdote of the humourist or a letter purporting to be his found ready admittance to newspapers and magazines. The first number of the *Lady's Magazine*, for example, which was started in 1770, opened with "A Sentimental Journey by a Lady", and three years later a periodical called *The Sentimental Magazine* was launched for promoting the sentimental style and philosophy of the "inimitable" Yorick. The eagerness of the public to read something more of Sterne's, or to know more about him, led to many forgeries, of which may be mentioned an imaginary autobiography, eked out by moral sayings, that appeared in 1770, bearing the title of *The Posthumous Works of a late Celebrated Genius*, since known as *The Koran*, under which name the forgery has been several times published in editions

* Three deeds comprising the transaction were registered at North-allerton, one on May 4, and the other two on May 30, 1774.

of Sterne's works aiming at completeness. Its author, it should have been known, was Richard Griffith the elder, who betted with a friend that he could write a book which "would pass current on the world as a writing of Mr. Sterne"; and won (as he said himself) the bet.* Not much, however, really Sterne's, appeared between 1769 and February 1775, when a sensation was caused by the publication of ten letters from Sterne to Mrs. Draper, which served to float more forgeries, sometimes interspersed with genuine scraps.

As if her arrival had been timed to profit most by this awakened interest in Sterne, Mrs. Medalle came to London sometime during the spring of 1775, with a rare collection of letters, which she and Mrs. Sterne had brought together before going into France, and to which additions were still to be made through the summer. The daughter of Sterne took genteel lodgings, sat for her portrait, and altogether displayed her father's skill in whetting the public appetite for a new book by talk about it long in advance of publication.

"*Speedily will be published*", as she and Becket phrased the advertisement for the newspaper, "Embellished with an elegant engraving of Mrs. Medalle, from a picture by Mr. West, (with a dedication to Mr. GARRICK) SOME MEMOIRS of the LIFE and FAMILY of the late Mr. LAURENCE STERNE. Written by Himself. To which will be added, 1. Genuine Letters to his most intimate friends on various subjects, with those to his wife, before and after marriage; as also those written to his daughter. 2. A Fragment, in the manner of Rabelais. Now first published by his daughter (Mrs. Medalle) from the originals in her father's hand-writing.

"Printed for T. Becket, Adelphi, in the Strand.

"Mrs. Medalle begs leave to return her most grateful thanks to those Ladies and Gentlemen who have already favoured her with so many of her father's letters, and still intreats those who may have any by them, to send them to her Bookseller as above, (as speedily as possible) that they may be inserted in the edition now prepared for the press."

After repeated advertisements of this kind, the letters

* See Griffith's anonymous *Something New*, II, 152 (second edition, London, 1772).

and miscellanies—three volumes in the whole—were at length published on October 25, 1775. The title was varied from the announcement to “LETTERS of the late Rev. Mr. LAURENCE STERNE, to his most intimate FRIENDS. With a FRAGMENT in the Manner of *Rabelais*. To which are prefix’d, MEMOIRS of His LIFE AND FAMILY. Written by HIMSELF. And Published by his Daughter, Mrs. MEDALLE.” The portrait by West, which was engraved by Caldwell for a frontispiece, represented Lydia in the fashionable dress of the period bending over the bust of her father, with one hand resting on his laurelled head and the other holding a sheet of manuscript. In no better taste was the dedication to Garrick, which aimed helplessly at the whimsical style of Sterne. A brief preface, following Garrick’s epitaph, assured the public that the authenticity of the letters might be depended upon. Some of them, said Mrs. Medalle, had been preserved by her mother, and others had been furnished by her father’s friends, from whom she had “experienced much benevolence and generosity”. Then followed two elegies, reprinted from the magazines, in one of which Sterne was ranked next to Shakespeare. After these introductory details, came the brief autobiography that Sterne wrote near his death to satisfy Lydia’s curiosity, and one hundred and eighteen letters, if we count *An Impromptu* forming part of a letter which was sent to the publisher by a certain S. P., living at Exeter. The third volume concluded with *The Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais*, which appears to have been a discarded digression originally written for the fourth volume of *Tristram Shandy*.

The autobiography was a masterly piece of condensation, what the French call a *précis*, wherein one continuous paragraph, running over a few pages, sufficed the author for the story of his ancestry and of his life down to the first visit to France, to say nothing of whimsical comment and anecdote by the way. No wonder that the marvellous sketch, as the first authentic revelation of Sterne in the pre-Shandean period, was widely quoted in magazines and newspapers, where it was usually given the place of honour on the first page. And for Sterne in his intimacies were the sentimental

outpourings of the young Prebendary of York in letters to Miss Lumley while she was away in the country; descriptions of his doings in London in the first flush of his fame, sent down to his friend Stephen Croft, the squire of Stillington; reckless impromptus to Hall-Stevenson and the London smart set; promises of amendment to Warburton; his first French triumph all written out for Garrick; and his last letter to Mrs. James as he lay dying. Surely no one could ask for more. Walpole of course intended a compliment when he wrote to Mason two days after publication: "I have run through a volume of Sterne's *Letters*, and have read more unentertaining stuff."

In view of the rich material that Mrs. Medalle thus presented to the public, perhaps one should not be too insistent on her shortcomings as an editor. Misprints, mistakes in French phrases, and misnumbering of letters may be set down, if one wishes, to the ignorance of the compositor. Neither should a reader complain overmuch because proper names were suppressed, or indicated by their first and last letters or by an initial before a dash or a line of stars, for such was the custom of the day. People then liked to guess that D——d G——k, Esq., meant David Garrick, Esq., and to count the eight stars of the Earl of S * * * * * into the Earl of Shelburne. The task of editing Sterne's letters, it must be admitted further, would have been difficult for anyone however skilled, since many of them bore no date. Still Mrs. Medalle can not be excused for making slight attempt to place them in chronological sequence, for throwing them together, as it were, helter-skelter, so that they tell no continuous story. She began by assigning the Croft letters of 1760 to the indefinite period before the appearance of *Tristram Shandy*, and, with some improvements here and there, she proceeded in this slipshod path to the end. It would, indeed, be difficult to find in the entire range of literary biography a more shiftless piece of work.

To incompetency Mrs. Medalle added an amusing dishonesty wherever her mother or Mrs. Draper was concerned. The merry references to Mrs. Sterne were eliminated from all the correspondence except the Latin epistle to Hall-Stevenson,

which Lydia evidently could not read, else she would never have permitted to stand: "*Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus et ægrotus de meâ uxore plus quam unquam.*" And in all the sentimental passages on Eliza, her portrait, and her journal, the editor either substituted her own name or removed the warmth of phrase, leaving them quite cool and harmless. Just how she did this, it will be pleasant to see. To a letter from Coxwold to the Jameses in the summer of 1767, Sterne appended a long postscript from which we have already quoted:

"I have just received as a present from a right Honourable a most elegant gold snuff fabricated for me at Paris—I wish Eliza was here, I would lay it at her feet—however, I will enrich my gold Box, with her picture,—and if the Donor does not approve of such an acquisition to his pledge of friendship—I will send him his Box again—

"May I presume to inclose you the Letter I write to Mrs. Draper—I know you will write yourself—and my Letter may have the honour to chaperon yours to India. Mrs. Sterne and my daughter are coming to stay a couple of months with [me], as far as from Avignon—and then return—Here's Complaisance for you—I went five hundred miles the last Spring, out of my way, to pay my wife a week's visit—and she is at the expence of coming post a thousand miles to return it—what a happy pair!—however, en passant, she takes back sixteen hundred pounds into France with her—and will do me the honour likewise to strip me of every thing I have—except Eliza's Picture. Adieu."

After passing through Lydia's hands, the postscript came out reduced to the following brief paragraph:

"I have just received, as a present from a man I shall ever love, a most elegant gold snuff box, fabricated for me at Paris—'tis not the first pledge I have received of his friendship.—May I presume to enclose you a letter of chit-chat which I shall write to Eliza? I know you will write yourself, and my letter may have the honour to *chaperon* yours to India—they will neither of them be the worse received for going together in company, but I fear they will

get late in the year to their destined port, as they go first to Bengal."

The motives for most of these changes are apparent enough. But why "a right Honourable"—meaning, it would seem, Sir George Macartney—should be turned into "a man I shall ever love" is an enigma. Whether mutilations like this extend generally through the letters edited by Mrs. Medalle, there are no means of determining, for few of the originals are now extant. It would of course be unfair to infer from one or two instances that Lydia everywhere played fast and loose with the text; it is more likely that she was content, unless her mother and Mrs. Draper were involved, merely to improve her father's style by substituting here and there a commonplace expression for his piquant phrases.

Her mission to England over, Mrs. Medalle returned to Albi. The rest of her story may be told, so far as one knows it, in a single sentence. Her son was placed in the Benedictine school at Sorèze, where he died in 1783, his mother, it was expressly stated, being already dead. Asthmatic from childhood, Lydia had doubtless succumbed to the same disease that her father so long struggled against only to be overcome in the end. The little boy, "not made to last long", any more than were Sterne's brothers and sisters, was the last descendant of the humourist.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. DRAPER

MRS. DRAPER, too, was already dead after an eventful career since we last saw her as queen of Tellicherry, attended in her progresses by a guard of sepoys. In 1771, her husband was appointed chief of the factory at Surat, the most lucrative position he had yet held, whence she wrote on her birthday a long letter to her cousin Tom descriptive of a typical day with friends amid the new scenes.* Every morning she rose with the lark and ambled out on her palfrey eight or ten miles, after the fox sometimes, and at rarer intervals joining large parties in the hunt for antelopes with leopards. At night there was an occasional dance followed by supping on a cool terrace till daybreak. But despite exercise in the open air and an abstemious diet, consisting of "soupe and vegetables with sherbet and milk", her health, she complained, was breaking under the fierce heats of Surat; and scandal, do what she might, persisted in pursuing her, all because she liked the conversation of sensible men better than the unmeaning chit-chat of the women around her. Far from being the "gay, dissipated, agreeable woman" that she was accounted by "the worldly wise", she would have much preferred to the life she was living at Surat the quiet of a "thatched palace" in England, with her books and an appreciative husband who could moralise with her the rural scene.

The next year, Draper was removed from his position at Surat and recalled to Bombay, not because of any inefficiency on his part, but owing, it was said, to a cabal formed against him. "We are adventurers again", Mrs. Draper wrote home

* The account of Mrs. Draper is based mostly upon manuscript letters described in the bibliography. See also a chapter on Mrs. Draper and incidental references to her in James Douglas, *Bombay and Western India*.

from Bombay, "and so much to seek for Wealth as we were the first Day of our landing here". Neither husband nor wife was able to withstand adversity, though but temporary. There were hot altercations between them, culminating in criminations and recriminations which need be touched on but lightly. The ostensible point of dispute, to begin with, was over Mrs. Draper's return to England. Her husband, she claimed, had distinctly promised her that she might be with her daughter on her twelfth birthday, occurring in October, 1773. A longer sojourn in India, she often repeated, would mean a ruined constitution and quick-coming death. Draper, who perhaps did not deny his promise, pleaded the expense of the journey and of a life apart. If his wife's health were declining, she might follow the advice of her physician and visit the neighbouring hot springs, which were as good as any in England.

The troubles between husband and wife were reaching an acute stage in the spring of 1772, when Mrs. Draper described her unhappy situation in two letters home—one to her cousin Tom and one to Mrs. James, which, taken together, really constitute an autobiography covering more than a hundred pages of print. Now thoroughly disillusioned, Mrs. Draper passed in review her trivial education, the ill-starred marriage to a "cool, phlegmatic" official, who was accusing her of intrigues which she had no opportunity of committing were she disposed to them, the friendship with Sterne, the efforts to aid his widow and daughter, her literary aims and ambitions, and the sorrow that was fast settling close upon her. Of Sterne she said, "I was almost an Idolator of His Worth, while I fancied him the Mild, Generous, Good Yorick, we had so often thought him to be". But "his Death", she must add with words underscored, "gave me to know, that he was tainted with the Vices of Injustice, meanness and Folly". Of herself and husband, she wrote to Mrs. James: "I cannot manage to acquire confirmed Health in this detested Country; and what is far worse, I cannot induce Mr. Draper to let me return to England; tho' he must be sensible, that both my Constitution and Mind, are suffering by the effects of a Warm Climate—I do, and must wonder that he will not,

for what good Purpose my Residence here can promote, I am quite at a loss to imagine, as I am disposed to think favorably of Mr. D's Generosity and Principles. My dear James, it is evident to the whole of our Acquaintance, that our Minds are not pair'd, and therefore I will not scruple informing *you*—that I neither do, nor will any more, if I can help it live with him as a Wife—my reasons for this are cogent; be assured they are;—or I would not have formed the Resolution—I explain them not to the World—tho' I could do it, and with credit to myself; but for that very cause I will persevere in my silence—as I love not selfish Panegyricks. —How wretched must be that Woman's Fate, my dear James, who loving Home, and having a Taste for the Acquitments [*sic*], both useful and Agreeable, can find nothing congenial in her Partner's Sentiments—nothing companionable, nothing engagingly domestic in his Manner, to endear his Presence, nor even any thing of that Great, or respectful sort, which creates Public Praise, and by such means, often lays the Foundation of Esteem, and Complacency at Home." The sad record was relieved by many charming feminine traits of character and ennobled by the mother yearning to be with her daughter left behind in England.

One aspect of the self-drawn portrait has especial interest somewhat apart from the approaching crisis in her relations with her husband. Since her return to India Mrs. Draper had developed into a Blue-Stocking. She had of course no personal acquaintance with Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, whose assemblies of Blue-Stockings were then famous; but the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* duly reached India. After reading Mrs. Montagu's book, Mrs. Draper declared that she "would rather be an Attendant on her Person, than the first Peeress of the Realm". And so under this new inspiration Mrs. Draper resumed the scribbling to which she had been encouraged by Sterne. "A little piece or two" that she "discarded some years ago", were completed; they were "not perhaps unworthy of the press", but they were never printed. Though these efforts seem to be lost, Mrs. Draper took advantage of the occasion to weave into her letter to Mrs. James various little essays, which may

be described in her phrase as "of the moral kind", because they have to do with practical conduct. Anxiety for the welfare of her daughter Betsey, who had been put to school at Kensington, leads to several pages on the boarding-school and the parlour-boarder, which are good enough to find a place in one of Mrs. Chapone's essays. A little way on, she relates the "story of a married pair, which", she says, "pleased me greatly, from the sensible singularity of it". The tale tells of a wealthy and indolent man in North India who married a smart young woman to "rouse his mind from its usual state of Inactivity"—and he succeeded. The wife, too, discarded her light airs, and became a most agreeable woman. It all reads like a character sketch from Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. There is also an experiment in the sentimental style, wherein is told the story of "a smart pretty French woman", who, shutting out all promiscuous loves and friendships, kept her heart for her dear husband alone and one "sweet woman" across the Alps. "The lovely Janatone", writes Mrs. Draper, "died three Years ago—after surviving her Husband about a Week and her Friend a twelvemonth." This constant couple, she said, were travelling in England when she was there, and Sterne introduced them to her. And besides these, there are other sketches from life, and vivid descriptions of society at Bombay. If Eliza did not write exactly, as Sterne flattered her, "with an angel's pen", she knew how to ramble agreeably.

Crudities that appear in Mrs. Draper's written speech were not observable in her conversation, which charmed the circle of young civilians and travellers who gathered round her at Bombay. To her more intimate friendship was admitted a certain George Horsley, who used to sit and read poetry to her. Illness sent him back to England, with extravagant letters of recommendation from her to the Selatens and the Jameses, as a young man possessing "one of the most active Minds and Generous Hearts that ever I knew inhabit a human Frame". To his care she entrusted diamond rings and other jewels valued at £600, which he was to sell for her in England. She gave her passport, too, to a Mr. Gambier, "a fine youth and dear to me and all who know

him on the score of his Worth, strict Principles, and Admirable Manners". Much greater men than these, typical of many, came under her spell. James Forbes, author of *Oriental Memoirs*, knew her well when a young man, and remembered to the end her "refined tastes and accomplishments".* Likewise the Abbé Raynal, the historian of the Indies, made her acquaintance at Bombay, and experienced at their first meeting a sensation which puzzled him. "It was too warm", he said, "to be no more than friendship; it was too pure to be love. Had it been a passion, Eliza would have pitied me; she would have endeavoured to bring me back to my reason, and I should have completely lost it." And of the personality that awakened his admiration, the ecclesiastic added: "Eliza's mind was cultivated, but the effects of this art were never perceived. It had done nothing more than embellish nature; it served in her case only to make the charm more lasting. Every instant increased the delight she inspired; every instant rendered her more interesting."†

Mrs. Draper's sentimental friendships with young men, from whom she accepted costly presents, were quite sufficient to occasion comment and arouse suspicions in her husband, though there may have been, as she always averred, no harm in her conduct beyond impropriety from the standpoint of convention. On the other hand, to restate her side of the story, her husband had been engaged, ever since her return to India, in one coarse intrigue after another. During their last year together—for it had come to that—the Drapers lived at Marine House, Mazagon, sometimes called Belvidere House, commanding a fine prospect of Bombay and its harbour. Through the year Mrs. Draper continued to insist on her husband's fulfilment of his promise with reference to the visit to England, and he continued to remain hopelessly immovable in his refusal. The long impending crisis came early in January, 1773, when the time for Mrs. Draper's sailing was at hand, were she to arrive in England by her

* *Oriental Memoirs*, I, 338-39 (London, 1813).

† Raynal, *Histoire Philosophique et Politique*, * * * *des Européens dans les deux Indes*, II, 88-89 (new edition, Avignon, 1786).

daughter's birthday. On the evening of Monday, the eleventh of January, occurred an altercation between husband and wife in which each, it would seem, accused the other of misconduct, Mr. Draper naming Sir John Clark of the British navy, and Mrs. Draper retaliating with the name of Miss Leeds, one of her women in attendance, whom she claimed had fabricated the story against herself out of jealousy. Driven to desperation, Mrs. Draper fled from Marine House on the night of the following Thursday, and placed herself under the protection of her admirer, thus lending colour to the suspicions of her husband. She escaped, it was said at the time, by letting herself down to the officer's ship by a rope from her window.*

Three letters are extant which Mrs. Draper wrote on the evening of her elopement. In the first of them, she gave "a faithful servant and friend", one Eliza Mihill, about to return to England, an order on George Horsley for all her jewels. "Accept it, my dear woman", wrote Mrs. Draper, "as the best token in my power, expressive of my good-will to you." To Mr. Horsley she addressed a brief, impassioned note explaining what she had done for Betty Mihill and what she was about to do for her own freedom. The third letter, which was left behind for Mr. Draper in justification of her conduct, was composed under great agitation of mind at the moment of the last perilous step, for which she took full responsibility. After beseeching that her husband temper justice with mercy if he believed her "all in fault", Mrs. Draper proceeded to plead her cause:

"I speak in the singular number, because I would not wound you by the mention of a name that I know must be displeasing to you; but, Draper, believe me for once, when I solemnly assure you, that it is you only who have driven me to serious Extremities. But from the conversation on Monday last he had nothing to hope, or you to fear. Lost to reputation, and all hopes of living with my dearest girl on peaceable or creditable terms, urged by a despair of gaining any one point with you, and resenting, strongly resenting, I own it your avowed preference of Leeds to myself, I MYSELF

* David Price, *Memoirs* * * * of a Field Officer, 61 (1839).

Proposed the scheme of leaving you thus abruptly. Forgive me, Draper, if its accomplishment has excited anguish; but if pride is only wounded by the measure, sacrifice that I beseech you to the sentiment of humanity, as indeed you may, and may be amply revenged in the compunction I shall feel to the hour of my death, for a conduct that will so utterly disgrace me with all I love, and do not let this confirm the prejudice imbibed by Leed's tale, as I swear to you THAT WAS FALSE, though my present mode of acting may rather seem the consequence of it than of a more recent event. Oh! that prejudice had not been deaf to the reasonable requests of a wounded spirit, or that you, Draper could have read my very soul, as undisguisedly, as sensibility and innocence must ever wish to be read!

"But this is too like recrimination which I would wish to avoid. I can only say in my justification, Draper, that if you imagine I plume myself on the Success of my scheme, you do me a great wrong. My heart bleeds for what I suppose may possibly be the sufferings of yours, though too surely had you loved, all this could never have been. My head is too much disturbed to write with any degree of connection. No matter, for if your own mind does not suggest palliatives, all I can say will be of little avail. I go, I know not whither, but I will never be a tax on you, Draper. Indeed, I will not, and do not suspect me of being capable of adding to my portion of infamy. I am not a hardened or depraved creature—I never will be so. The enclosed are the only bills owing that I know of, except about six rupees to Doojee, the shoemaker. I have never meant to load myself with many spoils to your prejudice, but a moderate provision of linen has obliged me to secure part of what was mine, to obviate some very mortifying difficulties. The pearls and silk cloathes are not in the least diminished. Betty's picture, of all the ornaments, is the only one I have ventured to make mine.

"I presume not to recommend any of the persons to you who were immediately officiating about me; but this I conjure you to believe as strictly true, that not one of them or any living soul in the Marine House or Mazagon, was at all

privy to my scheme, either directly or indirectly, nor do I believe that any one of them had the smallest suspicion of the matter; unless the too evident Concern occasioned by my present conflict induced them to think Something extraordinary was in agitation. O! Draper! a word, a look, sympathetick of regret on Tuesday or Wednesday would have saved me the perilous adventure, and such a portion of remorse as would be sufficient to fill up the longer life. I reiterate my request that vindictive measures may not be pursued. Leave me to my fate I conjure you, Draper, and in doing this you will leave me to misery inexpressible, for you are not to think, that I am either satisfied with myself or my prospects, though the latter are entirely my own seeking.

“God bless you, may health and prosperity be yours, and happiness too, as I doubt not but it will, if you suffer your resentments to be subdued by the aid of true and reasonable reflections. Do not let that false idea of my triumphing induce you to acts of vengeance I implore you, Draper, for indeed that can never be, nor am I capable of bearing you the least ill-will; or treating your name or memory with irreverence, now that I have released myself from your dominion. Suffer me but to be unmolested, and I will engage to steer through life with some degree of approbation, if not respect. Adieu! again Mr. Draper, and be assured I have told you nothing but the truth, however it may clash with yours and the general opinion.”*

Mrs. Draper's elopement startled all civil and military India, for no woman was more widely known in the East. She became by this act the beautiful heroine of romance rescued by her lover from the tyranny of an ill-sorted or hateful marriage; she became another Guenevere or Iseult, we should say nowadays. In her flight she sought refuge with her rich uncle, Tom Whitehill, at Masulipatam—his “seat of empire”, whence he superintended the fiscal administration of five northern provinces ceded to the East India Company at the close of the war with Hyder Ali. “His

* Mrs. Draper's three farewell letters were published in the *Times of India*, February 24, 1894; and in the overland weekly issue of March 3, 1894.

House, his Purse, Servants, Credit'' were all placed at his niece's devotion. While under the protection of her powerful uncle, Mrs. Draper could safely view from a distance the fury of a husband who saw himself outwitted on all sides. From the mayor's court at Bombay writs were obtained for the arrest of Sir John Clark, but the process-server was never able to find him.* And when the enraged husband threatened an action for divorce, Mrs. Draper, with the aid of her uncle, collected against him evidence to be placed in the hands of his superior officers so damaging to his private character that his better judgment called a halt to the contemplated proceedings. He was made to see that he could not proceed further against his wife without endangering all hope of remunerative service for the future.

On going to her uncle's, it had been Mrs. Draper's intention to remain with him for the rest of her life should he wish it, for her prospects of ever seeing England again were then very remote. In the autumn of 1773, she accompanied him to Rajahmundry, some eighty miles distant, where he pitched his tents for the winter and began negotiations with the zemindars, or petty princes of his provinces, over the land taxes of the next three years. The novelty of life in tents, joined with renewed health, put Mrs. Draper into spirits for a time; but she soon found Rajahmundry as uncongenial to her taste as was any other part of India. This restlessness crept into a confidential letter to her cousin Tom of Hordington, dated January 20, 1774, written to inform him of her present situation. Her uncle, she told Tom, was an "extraordinary character", upright in all his dealings with the native princes, and generous to a degree she had never before witnessed in any man; and yet, though possessing all these good qualities, he was so passionate and jealous in his affections that he could not brook any preference for others. Some sign of preference, though sentimental, Mrs. Draper showed in an unguarded moment for her uncle's devoted assistant in the administration, "premier" she called him, a young man near her own age, named Sullivan, who knew how to address "the heart and judgement without misleading

* *Bombay Quarterly Review*, 196 (1857), as cited by Douglas, I, 432.

either". After that unguarded moment, life ran less smoothly at Rajamundry, though there is no indication of open breach between uncle and niece.

The letter to her cousin clearly foreshadowed Mrs. Draper's return to England towards the close of 1774. Henceforth her life was to be passed with her daughter among relatives and friends at home. While in London she occupied lodgings at "Mr. Woodhill's, Number 3 Queen Anne Street West, Cavendish Square",* within comfortable reach of the Jameses and the Nunehams, among whom she could hardly have failed to meet Mrs. Medalle, unless precautions were taken against it. Ecstasy was given to her re-entrance into the old circles by the publication, early in February, 1775, of ten letters which she had received from Sterne at the height of his infatuation. Some mystery surrounds the appearance of the little volume bearing the title of *Letters from Yorick to Eliza*, printed for G. Kearsley and T. Evans. It was ushered in with a dedication to Lord Apsley, then Lord High Chancellor, whose father, the old Lord Bathurst, once introduced himself to Sterne at the Princess of Wales's court and took him home to dine with him. A preface by the publisher authenticated the letters, saying that they had been faithfully copied with Mrs. Draper's permission by a gentleman at Bombay. An editor told the public who Eliza was, and commented upon "the tender friendship" between her and Sterne. Though the letters may have been procured in this way, it is more likely that Mrs. Draper directly authorised the publication after her return to London, and that she herself furnished copies of the originals and the facts for her biographical sketch. What the preface said of her, so far as it went, was accurate; and except in capitals and punctuation, the letters seem to have been in no way tampered with; at any rate a comparison of the printed text with the copy of the first letter, still extant in Mrs. Draper's own hand, reveals no differences beyond these minor details. Whatever may be one's opinion as to the propriety of the publication during Mrs. Draper's lifetime, it was an honest book; and Mrs. Draper is to be further commended for not

* Wilkes, *List of Addresses*.

including in the volume the later letters from Sterne reflecting upon the greed and violent temper of his wife, since dead.

As the Eliza of this remarkable series of letters, Mrs. Draper received many attentions from Sterne's old friends, who were curious to see the woman to whom Yorick sent his sermons and *Tristram Shandy*, to whom he indited love epistles on going out to breakfast, on returning from Lord Bathurst's, or while waiting in Soho for Mr. James to dress. They wanted to see, too, her replies from which Sterne quoted a moral observation or two, expressing the opinion that her part of the correspondence should be published. "When I am in want of ready cash", he said, "and ill health will not permit my genius to exert itself, I shall print your letters, as finished essays, 'by an unfortunate Indian lady'. The style is new; and would almost be a sufficient recommendation for their selling well, without merit—but their sense, natural ease, and spirit, is not to be equalled, I believe, in this section of the globe; nor, I will answer for it, by any of your countrywomen in yours." On the strength of this warm recommendation of Mrs. Draper's epistolary style, her publisher tried to flatter her into print as another Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; but "her modesty was invincible to all the publisher's endeavours". "Altho' Mr. Sterne was partial to every thing of her's", she invariably replied, good sense triumphing over vanity, "she could not hope that the world would be so too." Some letters had better be published posthumously; and to this class belonged Mrs. Draper's. In lieu of what she refused to give out to the public, the literary forger, as might be expected, offered his wares. In April appeared *Letters from Eliza to Yorick*, purporting to be correct copies of Mrs. Draper's letters to Sterne received "from a lady, not more dignified by her rank in life, than elevated by her understanding". The slight volume was entirely the work of some unknown hack-writer.

Several well-known men were at once eager to win Mrs. Draper's friendship. Wilkes, after introducing her to his daughter, set out on Sterne's path to closer relations by sending her a present of books, accompanied by praise of her wit and conversation. In return, Mrs. Draper thanked him for

the volumes, but deprecated the politician's flattery, the intent of which she could not have failed to understand. William Combe, the subsequent author of *Dr. Syntax*, was also ambitious of standing in her favour, and long afterwards boasted that she was more partial to him than she had ever been to Sterne. But the nearest successor to Sterne was the Abbé Raynal, who, since their meeting at Bombay, had been in correspondence with Mrs. Draper and now associated with her in England. Like Sterne, he extolled her beauty, her candour, and sensibility, and imagined her the inspirer of all his work. Losing self-control completely, the Abbé proposed that she leave her family and friends and take up her residence with him in France. "What joy did I not expect", he wrote, "from seeing her sought after by men of genius, and beloved by women of the most refined tastes." Mrs. Draper valued the distinguished friendship; but if she ever had any thought of quitting England for Paris, she was prevented by illness and death.

After 1775, Mrs. Draper sinks from view. It is probable that she lived in dignified retirement with her daughter among relatives, despite the attempts to allure her into questionable friendships. She was surely a welcome visitor at Hoddington, the seat of her cousin Thomas Mathew Selater, who had been her confidential correspondent since childhood. And by some turn in her fortunes, over which one can only idly speculate, she seems to have been taken under the protection of Sir William Draper, kinsman and perhaps brother to her husband. This old warrior, who had fought with his regiment by the side of Clive in India and led a successful expedition against the Philippines, was then settled on the Clifton Downs near Bristol. At his seat, named Manilla Hall, after the city which he had captured, Mrs. Draper may have passed her last years. Such at least is the conjecture of local history.*

In any case, Mrs. Draper's residence at Clifton was brief. The young woman whose oval face and brilliant eyes had startled two ecclesiastics out of propriety, died on August 3, 1778, in the thirty-fifth year of her age. She was buried in

* George Pryce, *A Popular History of Bristol*, 119 (Bristol, 1861).

the cathedral at Bristol, where a diamond in the north aisle of the choir marks her grave. Near-by in the north transept was erected, two years after her death, a mural monument by Bacon, the popular sculptor. The addition of a nave to the cathedral a century later made it necessary to take down all the monuments in the transepts. Mrs. Draper's was then removed to the beautiful cloisters. From a plain base rises a pointed arch of Sienna marble, under which stands, on each side of a pedestal supporting an urn, two draped female figures of white marble in *alto relievo*; of which the one, holding a torch in her right hand, is looking away and upward, while the eyes of the other are cast down towards a basket in her left hand containing a pelican feeding her young. Across and over the urn, above and between the two figures, lies an exquisitely carved wreath. An inscription, interpreting the allegory, says that in Mrs. Draper were united "Genius and Benevolence".*

The three men who had professed admiration for Mrs. Draper took notice of her death, each in his own characteristic way. Wilkes bluntly wrote the word *dead* after her name in his address-book, else he might forget it. Combe, the literary hack, traded upon her name by bringing out the next year two volumes of *Letters Supposed to have been Written by Yorick and Eliza*. The fictitious correspondence, cleverly enough framed, began with Mrs. Draper's return to India in 1767, and closed with a farewell letter from Sterne just as death was impending. Raynal opened his *History of the Indies*, which was then passing to a second edition, and inserted a mad eulogy upon Eliza, from which I have quoted the soberer passages. "Territory of Anjengo", he exclaimed, addressing the land of her birth, "in thyself thou art nothing! But thou hast given birth to Eliza. A day will come when the emporiums founded by Europeans upon Asiatic shores will exist no more. * * * The grass will cover them, or the Indian, avenged at last, will build upon their ruins. But if my works be destined to endure, the name of Anjengo will dwell in the memories of men. Those who read me, those

* J. Britton, *History of the Cathedral Church of Bristol*, 63 (London, 1830); Pryce, *A Popular History of Bristol*, as above.

whom the winds shall drive to these shores, will say, 'There was the birth place of Eliza Draper.''' To the influence of the happy climate of Anjengo were attributed the personal charms of Mrs. Draper, which even the gloomy skies of England could not obscure. "A statuary", said the Abbé, "who would have wished to represent Voluptuousness, would have taken her for his model; and she would equally have served for him who might have had a figure of Modesty to portray. * * * In every thing that Eliza did, an irresistible charm was diffused around her. Desire, but of a timid and bashful cast, followed her steps in silence. Only a man of honour would have dared to love her, but he would not have dared to avow his passion. * * * In her last moments, Eliza's thoughts were fixed upon her friend; and I cannot write a line without having before me the memorial she has left me. Oh! that she could also have endowed my pen with her graces and her virtue!"* If these concluding sentences may be read literally, Raynal received a letter from Mrs. Draper just before her death. Not long after this he visited Bristol with Burke. It is just a surmise, if nothing more, that he placed in the cathedral the monument to Mrs. Draper's memory.

Anjengo was again apostrophised by James Forbes in his *Oriental Memoirs*; and to the various places where Mrs. Draper lived while in India, travellers long made pilgrimages. Colonel James Welsh of the Madras infantry visited the house at Anjengo where she was supposed to be born, and carried away from a broken window pieces of oyster-shell and mother-of-pearl as mementos. He took pains to write also in his *Reminiscences* that the house she lived in at Tellicherry was still standing in 1812. A tree on the estate of her uncle at Masulipatam was called, it is said, Eliza's tree, in memory of her sojourn there after the flight from her husband. But a more interesting as well as more accessible shrine was the scene of her elopement overlooking the harbour of Bombay. Sketches of Belvidere House were brought to England by J. B. Fraser, the traveller and explorer; and from them Robert Burford painted a panorama for public exhibition in London. Those who were unable to make the

* For the complete eulogy, see the *Histoire Philosophique*, II, 85-89.

voyage to India might thus imagine the window from which Mrs. Draper descended to the ship of Sir John Clark, and hear the story that many a person had seen her ghost o' nights flitting about the corridors and verandahs of Belvidere in hoop and farthingale.*

At the same time Gothic fancy built up a pretty legend round the prebendal house which Sterne sometimes occupied at York. The humourist wrote, they used to say, *Tristram Shandy* in the parlour below, and slept above in a large "old fashioned room, with furniture coeval with its form, heavy and dark and calculated to excite every association favourable to the abode of spirits dark as Erebus". For a full quarter-century after his death, Sterne's ghost had the habit of revisiting the old bedroom every night just as the bell in the great minster tolled twelve, and of tapping thrice the forehead of any one who might be sleeping there. The actor Charles Mathews, who took the lodgings while playing at York, because they were cheap, found Sterne's visitations in no wise troublesome, and at length laid the perturbed spirit.†

* Douglas, *Bombay and Western India*, I, 177, 403, 418. A vignette of the view of Belvidere was made for the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, July 9, 1831.

† *Memoirs of Mathews*, I, 247-55.

CONCLUSION

MORE than a century has rolled by since Sterne's ghost last walked his chambers in Stonegate; but even yet one may feel the spell which the charming Yorick once cast over his contemporaries, who were loth to let him die; who, long after he was dead and gone, imitated him in their books and correspondence, who sometimes forged his name to letters and whimsical impromptus such as they imagined he might have written, and kept on relating anecdotes of him, as if he were still living. Few or none who knew Sterne well, from his valet to his archbishop and the men of fashion who crowded round him in his lodgings or at St. James's, and gave him the place of honour at their tables, ever broke friendship with him. Johnson, it is true, refused his company and thundered against "that man Sterne", but Johnson had really no acquaintance with him or with his books. If Warburton in a passion called Sterne "a scoundrel", it was after Sterne had told the Bishop of Gloucester that he could not accept him as guide and pattern in literature and conduct, without suppressing such talents as God had endowed him with. On the other hand, Lord Bathurst took Sterne under his protection as the wit that most reminded him of the glorious age of Queen Anne. Lord Spencer invited him to his country-seat, filled his purse with guineas, and was ever pressing him to delay his journey into Yorkshire. A box was always reserved for him and his company at both the theatres. Garrick took him home, dined him, and introduced him to "numbers of great people"; while Mrs. Garrick, delighted with the new guest, told him to regard their house as his own, to come and go whenever he pleased. Suard, though he associated with Sterne for only a few months, carried the image of him down to death. Whenever in after years Yorick's name was mentioned, Suard's eyes brightened, and he began to relate anecdotes about the

Chevalier Sterne as he appeared in the salons, imitating, as he did so, his voice, manners, and gestures.

Lessing's famous remark that he stood ready to shorten his own life could he thereby prolong Yorick's, would seem to be not quite sincere, had it not been several times repeated by the dramatist; for the two men never met. But Sterne's contemporaries made no distinction between Mr. Tristram Shandy and the book bearing his name. "Know the one", they used to say, "and you know the other." It has been reserved mostly for professional critics of later times to take Sterne to task for his slovenly style, for slang and solecisms, and for a loose syntax which drifts into the chaos of stars and dashes. Such criticism never occurred to those who knew him or could imagine him. Whether speaking or writing, Sterne might be heedless of conventional syntax; but he was always perfectly clear. His dashes and stars were not mere tricks to puzzle the reader; they stood for real pauses and suppressions in a narrative which aimed to reproduce the illusion of his natural speech, with all its easy flow, warmth, and colour. To read Sterne was for those in the secret like listening to him. Lessing, who was able to divine the author from his books, paid him as fine a compliment as was ever paid to genius.

Sterne's personality, like a great actor's, loses perforce its brilliancy in the pale reflection of a biography, wherein traits of manner and character are obscured by numberless facts, dates, and minor details necessary to a true relation of the humourist's career, but most difficult to carry in the memory and thereafter combine into a living portrait. No biographer, though the spell may be upon him, can hope to make it quite clear why Sterne captivated the world that came within his influence. His wit, humour, and pathos, which exactly hit the temper of his age, seem a little antiquated now as we derive these qualities second-hand from the books which he left behind him, and from the numerous anecdotes which were related after him, all rewrought for literary effect. Indeed, only a few of his letters retain their original freshness, for in most cases their phrases have been all smoothed out by editors and biographers. We may look upon the

wonderful portraits that were painted of him by Reynolds and Gainsborough, and observe his dress, figure, features, and bright, eager eyes; but we must add from our imagination the smile and the voice of the king's jester. Moreover, manners and morals have so completely changed since Sterne's day, that one is in danger of misjudging him. No ecclesiastic could now live the life that was lived by Sterne. He and his compeers would be promptly unfrocked. The scenes through which Sterne passed, the men and women with whom he associated, and the jests over which they laughed, have long since become impossible in smart society. Thackeray, who knew more of other men surrounding the Georges than he knew specifically of Sterne, made his confession when he said, after reading the letters of Selwyn and Walpole: "I am scared as I look round at this society—at this King, at these courtiers, at these politicians, at these bishops—at this flaunting vice and levity; * * * wits and prodigals; some persevering in their bad ways: some repentant, but relapsing; beautiful ladies, parasites, humble chaplains, led captains." In more complaisant mood Thackeray nevertheless felt the fascination of it all. "I should like to have seen", he then confessed, "the Folly. It was a splendid, embroidered, be-ruffled, snuff-boxed, red-heeled, impertinent Folly, and knew how to make itself respected." In this old world of the Georges, where the cardinal virtues were all forgotten, Sterne reigned as the supreme jester.

When Sterne first came to London in triumph, he was far from being the awkward country parson, lean, lank, and pale, that later caricature has represented him. He was a man hardly beyond the prime of life, of slight figure, near six feet in height, of rather prominent nose, with cheeks and lips still retaining traces of youthful colour and fullness,—and eyes soft and gentle as a woman's when they were in repose, but dark and brilliant when his spirit was stirred by conversation and repartee. In bearing he was from the first supple and courteous to an extraordinary degree. His oddities, which friends watched and commented upon, but never described, seem to have consisted in a drollery of face and voice when he paid a compliment or related a jest,—combined,

if under the excitement of burgundy and good fellowship, with droll movements of head and arms extending to the whole body, not at all ungraceful, one may be sure, but odd and peculiar, like Corporal Trim's. Then it was that his wonderful eyes took on their wild gleam.

This is all as it should be, for Sterne was a gentleman who had always chosen his companions among gentlemen. He belonged to an old and honourable family, whose men, sometimes possessing solid attainments, were commonly hasty of temper; whose women were alert and vivacious. His father, "a little smart man", inheriting the characteristics of the Sternes and Rawdons, was withal "of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design". Out of pity for the sad state of a woman beneath him in rank, the poor ensign married her, said the son, quarrelled with a fellow officer over a goose, and was straightway run through the body; but survived after a fashion, and followed his flag to the West Indies and to death of a fever. In thus describing his father, Laurence described his own temperament. Like his father, he showed himself lacking in that prudence and good sense necessary for getting on with grave people. He quarrelled with the one man who could make or unmake him at will. If not literally run through the body like his father before him, he received his quietus for the present. But time has its revenges. Sterne wrote his book; and within three months Mr. Tristram Shandy was as widely known throughout England as the Prime Minister who accepted the dedication. Thenceforth Sterne lived in the glare of the world. Blinded at first by the excess of light, he despatched letters down to York every day, saying that no man had ever been so honoured by the great. No less than ten noblemen called at his lodgings on a single morning. Garrick came; Hogarth came; Reynolds came. The bishops all sent in their compliments; Rockingham took him to Court; and Yorick was soon dining with the ladies of her Majesty's bedchamber. The jests and anecdotes with which he everywhere set tables on a roar were passed on to the coffee-houses, and thence through newsmongers to the world at large. And wherever the tall man in black went—and no doors were closed against him,—he was as much at

home as when in his country parish, driving his cattle afield or running down a goose for his friend Mr. Blake of York.

Such was Sterne's career in its abridgment. I have often thought, in following it, of a remark that George Eliot once made of Rousseau and her other wayward literary passions. "I wish you thoroughly to understand", she declared to a friend, "that the writers who have most profoundly influenced me * * * are not in the least oracles to me. It is just possible that I may not embrace one of their opinions,—that I may wish my life to be shaped quite differently from theirs." Still she read on and on in Rousseau and the rest, under the irresistible sway of emotions and perceptions novel to all her previous experiences. So it is with Sterne. It seemed to his contemporaries, as it seems to us, that no man ever possessed so keen a zest for living. You see this in his early life, in his preaching, in his reading, in his pastimes, and even in his farming. Write to me, he entreated a correspondent after returning home from his first campaign in town, and your letter "will find me either pruning, or digging, or trenching, or weeding, or hacking up old roots, or wheeling away rubbish". You see this zest in its startling fullness after the Yorkshire parson had begun his long and steady tramp through the rounds of pleasure in London, Bath, Paris, and Italy. When his course was finished, he had exhausted all pleasurable sensations, those of the peasant as well as those of the great world. If there were times when melancholy and despondency crept over him, he wisely kept within his lodgings or at Shandy Hall away from friends, and fought out single-handed the battle with evil spirits.

In the background of Sterne's character thus lay, as Bagehot once pointed out, a calm pagan philosophy. Although he well knew that he was sacrificing his life to pleasure, he never halted or swerved from the path on which he had set out; for he felt that he was but fulfilling his destiny. To the physicians who told him that he could not continue in his course another month, he replied that he had heard the same story for thirteen years. When the dreadful hemorrhages, so numerous that we cannot count them, fell upon

him, he accepted them without murmur, as the darkness which nature interposes between periods of light. And when he saw the approach of the "all-composing" night from which he knew no dawn would appear, he merely remarked that he should like "another seven or eight months, * * * but be that as it pleases God". It was doubtless this cheerful readiness of Sterne to take all that nature gives, down to the last struggle, that Goethe had in mind when he said that Sterne was the finest type of wit whose presence had ever been felt in literature.

A pagan in so far as he had any philosophy, Sterne was endowed with none of the grave virtues or contemptible vices described by moralists. If you run through the list of them as laid down by Aristotle or by Dante, you may stop a moment upon this or that virtue or upon this or that vice, but you quickly pass on to the end, with the perception that none pertains greatly to this man's character. Indeed, for certain of the practical virtues, Sterne expressed the most profound contempt, classing them with the deadliest of the seven deadly sins. Caution and Discretion, for example—the virtues of Samuel Richardson and his heroines—were to Sterne only the evil propensities of human nature, inasmuch as they are always intruding upon a man's conduct to prevent the free and spontaneous expression of his real selfhood. "They encompass", he often said in varying phrase, "the heart with adamant." Such virtues and such vices as Sterne possessed are rather comprehended in the ideal of old English knight-hood as modified by the spirit of the Renaissance. The virtues of the gentleman in those times were, according to Chaucer,—

"Truth and honoúr, freedom (generosity) and courtesý." And all his vices, lying under the pretty concealment of the most perfect manners, were of the flesh only.

Sterne could always be relied upon to perform with fidelity all ecclesiastical offices with which he was charged by his archbishop or by his dean and chapter. When absent from Sutton or Coxwold, he was careful to place over them capable curates, and to see to it that his surrogates made annual visitations to those other parishes lying within the

jurisdiction of his commissaryships. In all his engagements and appointments, he strove to be punctual to the hour, whether they were for business or for relaxation; and if illness or other circumstance intervened to keep him at home, he sent a note of apology so courteous in its phrasing that the receiver placed it aside among his treasures. So it was in the obscure days at Sutton and so it was after Sterne had entered the world of fashion. It must have been quite worth while for Lord Spencer to have presented him with a silver standish merely for the sake of the acknowledgment wherein Sterne blessed him in the name of himself, wife, and daughter, saying that "when the Fates, or Follies of the Shandean family have melted down every ounce of silver belonging to it, * * * this shall go last to the Mint".* If Sterne made any remark at dinner in the license of his wit which he thought might hurt the feelings of the host or of a sensitive guest, he appeared the next morning with a graceful apology, or sent a messenger with a note laying it all to the burgundy and asking that no offence be taken where none was intended. Sterne was kindly and generous to all who depended upon him. His contracts with the poor and obscure men whom he left in charge of his parishes show a consideration uncommon in those days, when pluralists were accustomed to grind and otherwise misuse their curates. Sometimes he gave a curate the whole value of a living. The persisting opinion that he long neglected his mother, we now know, is quite untrue. Furthermore, Sterne was always most attentive to the welfare of his wife and daughter, for whose health and ease he provided to the full extent of his purse. Six months before his death, he set in order his letters and stray papers, that they might be published for their benefit; and his last thoughts, as he lay dying, were upon Lydia.

Strangely enough, Sterne has been depicted as a hypocrite, as a Joseph Surface, thoroughly corrupt in his heart,

* Sterne was especially pleased with the inscription which the standish bore:—

"Laurentio Sterne A.M.
Joannes Comes Spencer
Musas, Charitasque omnes
propitias precatur"—*Morgan Manuscripts*

but posing as a moralist or a man of fine sentiments. No portrait could be further from the truth, for Sterne never pretended to be other than he was. Such qualities as nature gave him—whether they be called virtues or whether they be called vices—he wore upon his sleeve. If he felt no zeal for a cause, he never professed to have any. For a brief period he joined with his Church in denunciation of the Stuart Pretender and the Jesuits who were seeking restoration in England, but his passions soon cooled; he became disgusted with the part which he was playing, and resolved “that if ever the army of martyrs was to be augmented or a new one raised—I would have no hand in it, one way or t’other”. Rather than be suffocated, “I would almost subscribe”, he added, “to anything which does not choke me on the first passage”. In all this Sterne was perfectly sincere. Moreover, he believed the gospel as he preached it. He accepted his Church and all that it taught without question, not because he had meditated profoundly upon its doctrines, but because it was the Church of his ancestors in which he had grown up from childhood. To him the Bible was the most eloquent of books because it was inspired; and for the same reason the men and women therein portrayed were types of men and women of all times. When he set up a defence of miracles, taking Hezekiah for his theme, before the Parisian philosophers gathered at the English embassy, it was because he actually believed that the shadow went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, certainly not because he wished to appear odd and facetious. Any other inference would be to misunderstand completely the Yorkshire parson.

In contrast with intellects so highly cultivated as Holbach’s or Diderot’s, Sterne was ludicrously weak in the reasoning faculty and in that poise of character which comes from it. Locke was the only philosopher whom he could understand; all others were charlatans who poured forth words without meaning. His sermons, always graceful and sometimes entertaining, display no logic, with the possible exception of the one which Voltaire praised for its subtle analysis of conscience. And even in that sermon, Sterne’s discernments concern not so much the intellect as the feelings

which lead conscience astray. "Reason", Sterne once said, "is half of it sense", and he thereby described himself. For his was a most abnormal personality. Exceedingly sensitive to pleasure and to pain, he gave way to the emotions of the moment, receiving no guidance from reason, for he had none. Himself aware of this, he said variously, "I generally act from the first impulse" or "according as the fly stings". Had Sterne's heart been bad, he would have been a menace to society; but his heart was not bad. I can discern in him nothing mean or cowardly—Thackeray to the contrary notwithstanding. On the other hand, he was always courteous, generous, and unselfish. Men who came within his circle watched him, as we have watched him, amused rather than shocked, to see him, oblivious of all conventions, follow his momentary impulses into the wild follies and extravagances of high life. Only the grave shook their heads. To all others Sterne was a delightful absurdity.

Sterne's want of self-control was nowhere more conspicuous than in his relations with women. Feminine beauty simply overpowered him. First came Miss Lumley, whom he married because she was the first; and then followed in his later days Miss Fourmantelle, "my witty widow Mrs. Ferguson", Mrs. Vesey with her blue stockings, Lady Percy, and Mrs. Draper home from India without her husband, to mention a few names that have survived in these memoirs. The women who awakened his admiration, Sterne divided into three classes, discovering their types in Venus, Minerva, and Juno. None of the three goddesses, however, quite satisfied his ideal; for Venus, lovely as she was, had no wit; Minerva had wit, but she was inclined to be a prude; and Juno, for all her beauty, was too imperial. Venus he liked to look at as she whipped up to his carriage in Hyde Park and invited him to her cabinet for a dish of tea. Minerva and Juno, whom he saw in Mrs. Garrick and Mrs. James, he adored with bent knee from a safe distance, whence incense might be cast upon their altars. But when Venus and Minerva appeared in one woman, at once beautiful, witty, and vivacious, his poor heart utterly collapsed.

About women of this last type Sterne liked to dawdle,

exchanging tender sentiments; he liked, no doubt,—as we read in the *Sentimental Journey*—to touch the tips of their fingers and to count their pulse beats, all for the pleasurable sensations which he felt running along his nerves. In return, these sentimental women were enraptured; sometimes they came north during the summer to meet him at York and to be chaperoned by him, as he called it, to Scarborough for a week or a fortnight. The infatuation, except perhaps in the case of Mrs. Draper, was never a deep passion; it was only a transient emotional state, which quickly passed unless renewed by another sight of the charming face and figure. “We are all born”, said Sterne as we have before quoted him, “with passions which ebb and flow (else they would play the devil with us) to new objects.” The Anglican clergyman, remarked a Frenchman who observed his behaviour in Paris, was in love with the whole sex, and thereby preserved his purity. That may be quite true. Certainly it would be unjust to charge Sterne with gross immoralities, for there was nothing of the beast about the sublimated Yorick. His sins may have been only those sins of the imagination which frequently accompany a wasting disease; for we should not forget that Sterne had the phthisical temperament. Perhaps Coleridge correctly divined him when he said that Sterne resembled a child who just touches a hot teapot with trembling fingers because it has been forbidden him. And yet he lived in a society where the seventh commandment was most inconvenient and where no discredit fell upon a man if he broke it.

Of course I am entering no defence in behalf of Sterne’s conduct. I am merely explaining it from his volatile disposition. Nor would it serve any purpose to censure him for his follies and indiscretions. True, one is amazed at the freedoms of the old society. And were it not for Sterne’s humour, the man and his books would have become long since intolerable. But the everlasting humour of the man saves him; it lifts him out of the world of moral conventions into a world of his own making. We must accept him as he was, else close the book. Everything about him was unique—his appearance, what he did, what he said, what he wrote. Acts for which you would

reproach yourself or your nearest friends, you pass over in his case, for in them lurks some overmastering absurdity. "I am a queer dog", he wrote in reply to an unknown correspondent who conjectured that he must be one when over his cups, "I am a queer dog,—only you must not wait for my being so till supper, much less an hour after,—for I am so before breakfast."* No one could ever predict what Sterne would do under given circumstances. When in company, he sometimes sat the melancholy Jaques; at other times, he flashed forth a wild jest; and if it took well, then came another and another still wilder. There is the same wildness in *Tristram Shandy*, which opens with a jest, runs into buffoonery, and closes with a cock-and-bull story. But Sterne's humour was often, as in the *Sentimental Journey*, quiet and elusive. If a fly buzzed about his nose, he must catch it and safely carry it in his hand to the window and let it go free. If he saw a donkey munching an artichoke, he must give him a macaroon, just to watch the changes in the animal's countenance as he drops a bitter morsel for a sweet one. Governed by his whims in small and great things, Sterne was thoroughly unstable in his character.

As we view him in his books and in his life, Sterne had brief serious moods, but he quickly passed out of them into his humour. When he advised a brother of the cloth "to tell a lie to save a lie", he did not exactly mean it so, but he could not resist the humour of the absurd injunction. He must have been sorely troubled over his wife's insanity, but he could not announce her illness without awakening a smile in the hearer as he said: "Madame fancies herself the Queen of Bohemia and I am indulging her in the notion. Every day I drive her through my stubble field, with bladders fastened to the wheels of her chaise to make a noise, and then I tell her this is the way they course in Bohemia."

Nothing, however sacred, was immune against Sterne's wit. He was, if one wishes to put it that way, indecent and profane. And yet indecency or profanity never appears in his letters and books by itself or for its own sake. His loosest jests not only have their humorous point, but they

* *Morgan Manuscripts.*

often cut rather deeply into human nature. He had, as we have said, very little of the animal in him; and perhaps for this very reason, in the opinion of Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, he was amused by certain physical instincts and natural functions of the body when contrasted with the higher nature to which all lay claim. His imagination was ever playing with these inconsistencies, and down they went without premeditation, as might be easily illustrated from the conversations at Shandy Hall. Queer analogies of all sorts were ever running in Sterne's head. If it were a hot day, he thought of Nebuchadnezzar's oven. If he took a text from Solomon, he could not help questioning its truth on rising into the pulpit, for the antithesis between the wise man of the Hebrews and a York prebendary was too good to lose. He has been charged with parodies of St. Paul's greetings to the Corinthians. Of this he was, indeed, guilty on several occasions, but only when writing to a company of wits who spent their leisure in reading Rabelais and literature of that kind. The contrast between the little church that St. Paul founded at Corinth and a group of jesters that met under the roof of Hall-Stevenson could not be resisted. It must be sent to the Demoniacs for their amusement.

Sterne is, I dare say, the most complete example in modern literature of a man whose other faculties are overpowered by a sense of humour. He feels, he imagines, and he at once perceives the incongruities of things as ordered by man or by nature; but he does not think, nor has he any appreciation of moral values. What to others seems serious or sacred is to him only an occasion for a sally of wit. In a measure all great humourists since Aristophanes and Lucian have resembled him, for unrestrained utterance is essential to humour. The humourist is a free lance recognising no barriers to his wit. All that his race most prizes—its religion, its social ideals, its traditions, its history, and its heroes—is fair game for him, just as much as the most trivial act of everyday life. He is, as Yorick named himself, the king's jester, privileged to break in at all times upon the feast with his odd ridicule. But most humourists have had their moods of high seriousness, when they have turned from the gay to the grave

aspects of things. In *Don Quixote* there is so much tragedy behind the farce that Charles Kingsley thought it the saddest book ever written. Shakespeare passed from Falstaff and the blackguards that supped at the Boar's Head to Hamlet, Lear, and Othello. Fielding, in the midst of his comedy, had a way of letting one into a deeper self, as in that great passage where he cuts short an exaggerated description of Sophia's charms with the remark—"but most of all she resembled one whose image can never depart from my breast,"—in allusion to his wife just dead. To all these men there was something besides the humourist. There were in reserve for them great moral and intellectual forces. However far they may have been carried by their humour, there was at some point a quick recovery of the normal selfhood. Sterne had no such reserve powers, for he was compounded of sensations only. In his life and in his books, he added extravagance to extravagance, running the course to the end, for there was no force to check and turn him backward. He was a humourist pure and simple, and nothing else. The modern world has not seen his like. The ancients—though I do not pretend to speak with authority—may have had such a humourist in Lucian. But there is a difference in the quality of their humour. Lucian was sharp and acidulous. Sterne rarely, perhaps nowhere except in the sketch of Dr. Slop, reached the border where humour passes into satire; for satire means a degree of seriousness unknown to him. With Swift, Sterne said *vive la bagatelle*; but he added—what Swift could never say—*vive la joie*, declaring the joy of life to be "the first of human possessions."

APPENDIX

MANUSCRIPTS

No account of the Sterne manuscripts now existing can lay claim to completeness, for they lie scattered in many collections. The following lists comprise mostly such as have been employed in the preparation of this book, though it has seemed best to admit reference to certain manuscripts which can not be exactly placed at the present time, and are thus unknown to the writer from personal inspection:

Sentimental Journey. (British Museum, Egerton MSS 1610.) The printer's copy, with autograph corrections, of the first vol. of the *Sentimental Journey*. 174 pages. Small quarto, measuring 6 by 8 inches. The manuscript is accompanied by a letter giving its history. Sterne's alterations are numerous.

Sermons. The manuscript of the sermon on the "Temporal Advantages of Religion" formed a part of the collection of the late Frederick Locker-Lampson. It is now owned by W. K. Bixby, Esq., of St. Louis. It is inclosed in a wrapper addressed to Rev. Dr. Clarke and bearing the autograph of Henry Fauntleroy, the banker. The manuscript of the sermon on "Penances" was recently acquired by J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq. It has the following endorsement near the end: "Preached April 8th 1750. Present, Dr. Herring, Dr. Wanly, Mr. Berdmore."

Tristram Shandy. A copy of book IV, chs. 1-17, with corrections in Sterne's own hand, was at Skelton Castle in 1859. The copy was probably made by Lydia Sterne, who was at times her father's amanuensis (*Notes and Queries*, second series, VII, 15). The story of Le Fever in book VI, down to "As this letter came to hand" in the thirteenth chapter, was long preserved at Spencer House, St. James's Place,

London. Over the manuscript Lord Spencer wrote, "The Story of Le Fever, sent to me by Sterne before it was published" (*Appendix to Second Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission*, 20 (London, 1871). It was sold by the present Lord Spencer.

The Journal to Eliza. (British Museum, Additional MSS, 34527, ff. 1-40.) The first entry is dated Aprl. 13, [1767], and the last (a postscript) Nov. 1 [1767]. The Journal forms a part of the MSS bequeathed to the Museum by the late Thomas Washbourne Gibbs of Bath. The Gibbs MSS include also the draft of a letter from Sterne to Daniel Draper (summer of 1767); two letters with their original covers to Mr. and Mrs. James, dated respectively Coxwold, May 10, 1767, and York, Dec. 28, 1767; a long letter to Mrs. James from Mrs. Draper, dated Bombay, Apr. 15, 1772 (ff. 47-70); and two letters from Thackeray to T. W. Gibbs, relative to the Journal, dated May 31 and Sept. 12, [1852].

Miscellaneous Letters in the British Museum:

Letter to Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland. Sutton, Nov. 3, 1750. Four pages, folio. Address on back. (Egerton MSS 2325, f. 1.)

Dr. Jaques Sterne to Archdeacon Blackburne with reference to Laurence. York, Dec. 6, 1750. Four pages, quarto. (Egerton MSS 2325, f. 3.)

Letter to Dr. Jaques Sterne. [Sutton.] April 5, 1751. Eleven pages, folio. (Additional MSS 25479, f. 12.)

This letter, which is not in Sterne's hand, is accompanied by the following note: "Copied by permission of Mr. Rob. Cole of Upper Norton Street from a copy carefully made by some person for Mr. Godfrey Bosvile formerly of Gunthwaite and bought by Mr. Cole with many other papers of the Bosviles, July 25, 1851."

Letter to Becket. Paris. [April?] 12, 1762. Three pages, quarto. (Egerton MSS 1662, f. 5.)

Letter to Becket. Bagnères-de-Bigorre, July 15, 1763; with seal. Four pages, quarto, written on two; address on back. (Additional MSS 21508, f. 47.)

Letter to Panchaud and Foley, Bankers, at Paris. London, Feb. 27, 1767. Four pages, quarto, written on one page; address on back. (Additional MSS 33964, f. 381.)

Letters in the Morgan Collection. A part of the Letter-Book in which Sterne was accustomed to copy his own letters as well as those from his friends, is owned by J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq. Fifty-nine pages of writing on 34 leaves, measuring $7\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$ inches. With a view to the publication of his correspondence after his death, Sterne states on the first page, for the information of his survivors, where other letters may be found. See p. 473 of this biography. Seventeen letters and a fragment, of which five have been published in mutilated form. They comprise the following:

Letter dated York, Jan. 1, 1760, to a friend on the indecours of Tristram Shandy. Published.

Letter to Richard Berenger, gentleman of horse to George III. [March, 1760.] Published.

Letter written at York, apparently just after his return from France in June, 1764, to a lady in town. Unpublished.

Letter to Mrs. F——, of Bath,—probably Mrs. Ferguson. In this letter Sterne describes his personal appearance, saying that he is “near six feet high”. Date uncertain. Unpublished.

Letter to Miss M. Macartney,—that is, Miss Mary Macartney, afterwards Lady Lyttelton, wife of William Henry Lyttelton, Governor of South Carolina. Undated, but belonging to the summer of 1760. Unpublished.

Letter to “My dear Bramine”, i.e., Mrs. Draper, dated June or July [1767]. Unpublished.

Letter from Hall-Stevenson. Crazy Castle, July 13, 1766. Unpublished.

Reply to Hall-Stevenson. Coxwold, July 15, 1766. Unpublished.

Letter from Ignatius Sancho. July 21, 1766. Published.

Reply to Sancho. Coxwold, July 27, 1766. Published.

Letter from a Mr. Brown of Geneva to Hall-Stevenson, on *Tristram Shandy* and the kind of man its author must be. July 25, 1760. Unpublished.

Sterne's humorous reply to Mr. Brown. York, Sept. 9, 1760. Unpublished.

A Letter signed "Jenny Shandy", claiming to be "poor Mr. Shandy's sister". Unpublished.

Letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Vesey, London, June 20, [1764]. Published.

Letter to Lord Spencer, thanking him for a silver standish. Coxwold, Oct. 1, 1765. Unpublished.

Letter to Miss T——; i.e., Miss Tuting, who was going abroad. Coxwold, Aug. 27, 1764. Unpublished.

Letter to a Friend in Paris. Bond Street, London, Jan. 6, 1767. Unpublished.

Fragment of a Letter. Twelve lines. Unpublished.

Letters to the Rev. John Blake, master of the grammar school at York. Twelve or more letters written on foolscap ($7\frac{1}{4} \times 12\frac{1}{8}$ inches), and formerly belonging to Mr. A. H. Hudson of York. Eleven of these letters were published by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in his *Life of Sterne*. The original of one not included by him is now in the library of Mr. W. K. Bixby of St. Louis. The manuscript of one is owned by Mr. A. H. Joline, New York City; and of another by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. Still another was formerly in the collection of Mr. George T. Maxwell, New York City.

Four letters from Sterne to Lord Fauconberg. In the library of Sir George Wombwell, Newburgh Priory, Yorkshire. Dated respectively Paris, April 10, 1762; Montpellier, Sept. 30, 1763; London, Friday [Jan. 9], 1767; and Bond Street [London], Jan. 16, 1767.

Three Letters in the Alfred Morrison Collection, London. Two to Becket, dated respectively Toulouse, March 12, 1763, and Paris, March 20, 1764; and one to Panchaud, his banker at Paris, dated Florence, Dec. 18, 1765.

Single Letters in Private Collections:

Letter to Mr. Mills, merchant, Philpot Lane, London. Montpellier, Nov. 24, 1763. In the Huth Library, London. See Catalogue of the Huth Library, V, 1705 (London, 1880).

Letter to Garrick, requesting the loan of £20. [London, Jan., 1762.] In the library of Mr. A. H. Joline, New York City.

Letter to Dr. Jemm of Paris, introducing Mr. Symonds, and giving details of his winter in Italy. Rome, Easter Sunday, [1766]. Two pages, quarto $9\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Contained in the Great Album of Frederick Locker-Lampson, now owned by Dodd, Mead and Co., New York City (1908). Dr. Jemm may be identified perhaps with Dr. Alexandre Auguste Jamme, of Toulouse, then a well-known physician and man of letters, whom Sterne had probably met at Toulouse. He resided partly at Paris. Mr. Symonds seems to be the John Symonds, Esq., who subscribed to Sterne's Sermons of this year; not unlikely the John Symonds who succeeded Gray as Professor of Modern History at Cambridge.

Letter to Mr. Hesselridge at Lord Maynard's, with reference to the last volumes of Tristram Shandy and to the forthcoming sermons. York, July 5, [1765]. Two and one half pages, quarto $9\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Owned by Henry Sotheran and Co., London (1906). See p. 349.

Letter to Becket. Paris, Oct. 19, 1765. Two pages, quarto. Formerly owned by Robson and Co. London (1904).

Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Draper (*née* Sclater), mostly from India to members of her family in England. In Lord Basing's collection at Hoddington House, Odiham, Hants. Foolscap or large quarto,—paper sometimes red outside and buff inside. These letters, arranged chronologically, though they do not appear so in the MSS, comprise the following:

Elizabeth Sclater to her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Sclater. Bombay, March 13, 1758. An account of a first arrival at Bombay and of her father's house there.

To her aunt, Mrs. Pickering. (Elizabeth, wife of Dr. Thomas Pickering, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's London.) Undated. [1762?] Death of her sister Mary. Hopes to return the next year with her children.

To her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Sclater. Bombay, Sept. 26, 1762. Her declining health.

To her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Selater. Undated, but written while on her visit to England. [1765 or 1766.]

To her cousin, Thomas Mathew Selater, Esq. Dated "Earl of Chatham", May 2, 1767. Account of her voyage from England as far as Santiago, Cape Verde Islands. Sterne is mentioned.

To her cousin, T. M. Selater. Dated Malabar Coast, "Earl of Chatham", Nov. 29, 1767. Further account of her voyage, and fresh impressions of India.

To her aunt, Mrs. Pickering. "Bombay—High Meadow," March 21, 1768. Living in the country with her sister Louisa.

To her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Selater. Bombay, Oct. 28, 1768. Removal of Mr. Draper.

To her cousin, T. M. Selater. Tellicherry, Apr. 10, 1769. Mr. Draper reinstated in his old post. Her life at the settlement. Distress and chagrin over Mrs. Sterne's threats to publish her letters to Sterne.

To her cousin, T. M. Selater. Tellicherry, May, 1769. Interesting account of herself, of the marriage of her sister, and of life in India, where she was born.

To her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Selater. Tellicherry, Oct. 27, 1769. Reigning as queen of the settlement. Death of her son and of an uncle.

To her cousin, T. M. Selater. Surat, April 5, 1771, her birthday. Details of her present life.

To her aunt, Mrs. Pickering. Bombay, Feb. 6, 1772. Hopes to return to England within two years.

To her cousin, T. M. Selater. Bombay, March 4, 1772. Mr. Draper has been removed from office. Sketch of his character.

To T. M. Selater. Rajahmundry, Jan. 20, 1774. On her separation from Mr. Draper and on the protection of her uncle, Thomas Whitehill.

Lord Basing's MSS contain also a copy of Sterne's first letter to Mrs. Draper, which she sent to T. M. Selater, Esq., just before leaving England in 1767; a letter from her sister Mary (Mrs. Rawson Hart Boddam) to her uncle, Dr. Pickering, dated Bombay, Nov. 18, 1760; and the fragment of a letter from Emma Springett to Mrs. Elizabeth Selater, dated

Bombay, Jan. 7, 1794. The MSS are accompanied with notes and a pedigree of the Sclaters.

A long letter from Mrs. Draper to some member of her family in England, perhaps her father, is in the British Museum (Additional MSS 33963). Tellicherry, April, 1769. Mrs. Draper is assisting her husband with his correspondence.

Three letters which Mrs. Draper wrote on the evening of her elopement, Jan. 14, 1773, were published in the *Times of India* for Feb. 24, 1894, and in the overland weekly issue for March 3, 1894. The originals are in a private collection at Bombay. A letter from Mrs. Draper to John Wilkes, dated March 22, [1775?] is among the Wilkes MSS in the British Museum. See also the Gibbs Manuscripts as described above.

STERNE'S PUBLISHED WORKS

Except in so far as stray letters have escaped observation, the following lists comprise all of Sterne's works that have been published. The many forgeries which appeared in his name during and after his lifetime have been purposely excluded.

The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zerephath [*sic*], consider'd: A Charity-Sermon Preach'd on Good-Friday, April 17, 1747. In the Parish Church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, before The Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, Sheriffs and Commoners of the City of York, at the Annual Collection for the Support of two Charity-Schools. By Laurence Sterne, M.A. Prebendary of York. York: Printed for J. Hildyard Bookseller in Stonegate: and Sold by Mess. Knapton, in St. Paul's Church-Yard; Mess. Longman and Shewell, and M. Cooper, in Pater-noster-Row, London. M.DCC.XLVII. [Price Six-Pence.]

8vo. Printed by Cæsar Ward. Dedicated to the Very Reverend Richard Osbaldeston, D.D., Dean of York.

The Abuses of Conscience: Set forth in a Sermon, Preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter's, York, at the Summer Assizes, before The Hon. Mr. Baron Clive, and the Hon. Mr. Baron Smythe, on Sunday, July 29, 1750. By Laurence Sterne, A.M. Prebendary of the said Church.

Published at the Request of the High Sheriff and Grand Jury. York: Printed by Cæsar Ward: for John Hildyard, in Stonegate, 1750. [Price Six-Pence.]

8vo. Dedicated to Sir William Pennyman, Bart. High Sheriff of the County of York, and to the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury, whose names are all given.

A Political Romance, Addressed To ———, Esq; of York. To which is subjoined a Key. York: Printed in the Year MDCCLIX. [Price One Shilling.]

8vo. The title-page contains a quotation from Horace as given in this biography on p. 164. Title and Romance, pp. 1-24. Postscript, pp. 25-30. The Key, pp. 31-47. Two letters signed by Sterne and dated at Sutton-on-the-Forest, Jan. 20, 1759, pp. 49-60. By a printer's error the signature to the second letter appears as Lawrence Sterne. The printer was doubtless Cæsar Ward.

Of this rare pamphlet, three copies only are known to exist: one in the Library of the Dean and Chapter, York; one in the Subscription Library, York; and one in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Sterne's Romance brought to a ludicrous close a hot controversy, in which three other pamphlets appeared. The first was by Dr. Francis Topham of the Prerogative Court of York; the second was by Dr. John Fountayne, the Dean of York, with some aid from Sterne; and the third was by Dr. Topham. Published anonymously, their titles ran:

A Letter Address'd to the Reverend the Dean of York; in which is given a full Detail of some very extraordinary Behaviour of his, in relation to his Denial of a Promise made by him to Dr. Topham. York: Printed in the Year MDCCLVIII. [Price Six-Pence]

An Answer to a Letter address'd to the Dean of York, in the Name of Dr. Topham. York: sold by Thomas Atkinson, Bookseller in the Minster-Yard. MDCCLVIII.

A Reply to the Answer to a Letter lately addressed to the Dean of York. York: printed in the Year MDCCLIX. [Price Six-Pence.]

The first of the three pamphlets is dated York, Dec. 11, 1758; to the second is appended an attestation dated York, Dec. 24, 1758; to the third is appended an attestation dated Dec. 26, 1758. Sterne thus wrote his Romance during the first three weeks of January, 1759.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. 1760.

Small 8vo.* Two vols. First edition. The title-page contains a Greek quotation from the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus, the number of the volume, but nothing further,—no place of publication, no name of printer or publisher. But the advertisement of the forthcoming book in the *London Chronicle* for Dec. 24—Jan. 1, 1760, has the following

*The small octavos measure only 6x3¾ inches.

addition to the title: "York, printed for and sold by John Hinxman (Successor to the late Mr. Hildyard), Bookseller in Stonegate; J. Dodsley in Pallmall, and M. Cooper in Pater-noster-row, London; and by all booksellers." This imprint appears in no extant copies so far as known. The volumes were in the hands of reviewers in Dec., 1759. See pp. 181-183 of this biography.

On April 3, 1760, appeared the second edition of the first instalment with the addition to the title-page of "London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley." The second edition also contains a frontispiece by Ravenet after Hogarth and a dedication to the Right Honourable Mr. Pitt. The second edition was twice reissued by Dodsley during 1760.

There were several pirated editions. Especially interesting is an edition having the imprint: "London. Printed for D. Lynch, 1760." The copy in the British Museum bears Sterne's signature. This edition has the dedication to Pitt, but not the frontispiece.

The Sermons of Mr. Yorick. London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall.

Small 8vo. Two vols., numbered I and II. No date. Published, May 22, 1760. Bust portrait to vol. I. by Ravenet after Reynolds. Preface and Subscribers, followed by a second title-page.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall. M.DCC.LXI.

Small 8vo. Vols. III and IV. Each volume contains on the title-page a quotation from John of Salisbury. The first volume has a frontispiece by Ravenet after Hogarth. Published on Jan. 28, 1761.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt, in the Strand. MDCCLXII.

Small 8vo. Vols. V. and VI. Each volume has on the title-page two quotations, one from Horace and one from Erasmus. The fifth volume has a dedication to the Right Honourable John, Lord Viscount Spencer. Sterne's signature appears at the head of the first chapter. Published on Dec. 21, 1761.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. Dehont [*sic*], in the Strand. MDCCLXV.

Small 8vo. Volumes VII and VIII. The title-page to each volume has a quotation from Pliny. Signature at top of p. 1, vol. VII. Published on Jan. 22, 1765.

The Sermons of Mr. Yorick. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt, near Surry-Street, in the Strand. MDCCLXVI.

Small 8vo. Two vols., numbered III and IV. Contents, a second title-page, and Subscribers' Names. Published Jan. 22, 1766.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt, in the Strand. MDCCLXVII.

Small 8vo. Vol. IX Latin quotation on title-page. Dedication to a Great Man. Sterne's usual signature. Published on Jan. 30, 1767.

A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy. By Mr. Yorick. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt, in the Strand. MDCCLXVIII.

Two vols. Published in two styles: in small 8vo to match *Tristram Shandy*, and in large 8vo on imperial paper. There is a list of Subscribers with a star after the names of those who took imperial paper. In some copies appears an Advertisement promising that the work will be completed by the next winter. The Advertisement, being originally a loose sheet to be inserted in copies of either of the two styles, was rarely preserved. Published on February 24 or 25, 1768. See pp. 450-51 of this biography.

Sermons by the late Rev. Mr. Sterne. London: printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, Successor to Mr. Millar; and T. Beckett [*sic*] and Co. in the Strand. MDCCLXIX.

Small 8vo. Three vols., numbered V, VI, VII. Contents and Subscribers follow title-page. Published during the first week of June, 1769.

A Political Romance, Addressed To — — — Esq. of York. London. Printed and sold by J. Murdoch, bookseller, opposite the New Exchange Coffee-house in the Strand. MDCCLXIX.

12mo. Title, advertisement, and a list of the characters in the allegory with their real names opposite, pp. iv-x, Romance pp. 1-47. This is a reprint, with many textual changes, of the first half of the pamphlet as it appeared in 1759. The Key and the appended letters of the first edition were entirely cut away. Hall-Stevenson seems to have been responsible for the reissue.

Letters from Yorick to Eliza. London, printed for G. Kearsly, at No. 46, in Fleet-street; and T. Evans, near York-Buildings, Strand. 1775.

Small 8vo. One vol. Dedication to the Right Honourable Lord Apsley, preface, and ten undated letters which Sterne sent to Mrs. Draper in the winter and spring of 1767. Published in Feb., 1775, apparently with Mrs. Draper's sanction.

Sterne's Letters to His Friends on Various Occasions. To which is added, His History of a Watch Coat, with Explanatory Notes. London: printed for G. Kearsly, at No. 46, opposite Fetter-Lane, Fleet-Street; J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard; and T. Evans, in the Strand. MDCCLXXV.

Small 8vo. One vol. Introduction and thirteen letters, counting the *Watch Coat* (a reprint of the abridged *Political Romance*), which is treated as a letter. Published on July 12, 1775. Letters I-III comprise Sterne's first letter to Garrick, Dr. Eustace's letter to Sterne, and Sterne's reply to Dr. Eustace. Letters IV-X have often been pronounced spurious, apparently on the authority of William Combe, the author of *Doctor Syntax*, who said that he wrote seven of the letters in this volume. (See Combe's preface to his anonymous *Letters supposed to have been written by Yorick and Eliza*, London, 1779.) But Combe was lying. Some, and perhaps all, of the letters which he claimed to have fabricated in 1775, are genuine. Letter V had appeared in the *London Magazine* for March, 1774; and was to be published later in 1775, by Sterne's daughter, evidently from her father's copy. As she printed it, it bears the superscription "To Mrs. M[ea]d[ow]s, Coxwoud, July 21, 1765." Letter IX exists in Sterne's own hand; it is the letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Vesey, "dated London June 20", in the Morgan Manuscripts. Letter X, in which Sterne refers to rumours of his death, may be accepted. So, too, Letter XII, on his library and books. Letters VI, VII, VIII and XI may be forgeries, though they are more likely genuine.

Letters of the late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne, to his most intimate Friends. With a Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais. To which are prefix'd, Memoirs of his Life and Family, written by Himself. And published by his Daughter, Mrs. Medalle. London: printed for T. Becket, the Corner of the Adelphi, in the Strand. 1775.

Small 8vo. Three vols. Dedication to Garrick, two poems in memory of Sterne, memoirs or autobiography, 118 letters, and a fragment which Sterne had cast aside in making up the fourth volume of *Tristram Shandy*. A frontispiece to the first volume represents Mrs.

Medalle leaning over the bust of her father, from an engraving by Caldwell after West. Published on Oct. 25, 1775, though the preface bears the date, "June 1775". At the same time, Becket placed on sale a bronze bust of Sterne, "an exceeding good likeness". This is the largest and best single collection of Sterne's letters as originally published.

Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne; never before published. London: printed at the Logographic Press, and sold by T. Longman, Pater-Noster Row; J. Robson, and W. Clarke, new Bond Street; and W. Richardson, under the Royal Exchange. 1788.

12mo. One vol. Thirty-nine letters from Sterne to various friends, of which thirty had previously appeared in the *European Magazine* (Feb., 1787-Feb., 1788). Some of the letters are of doubtful authenticity, and others have certainly been tampered with; but most of them are in the main genuine beyond reasonable doubt, for the truth of the incidents related therein may be confirmed, partly by the Morgan Manuscripts and partly by what is known of Sterne from other sources. Of especial interest are letters VIII, IX, XI, XVIII, XIX, XXI (which may be dated Jan. 1, 1767), XXII, XXIII, XXXVII, and XXXIX. "Mrs. V—" of the correspondence is Mrs. Vesey; "Lady C— H" is probably Lady Caroline Hervey; and "W. C. Esq." may be William Combe, Esq., with whom Sterne was acquainted. It may be conjectured that Combe was responsible for the publication.

Seven Letters written by Sterne and His Friends, hitherto unpublished. Edited by W. Durrant Cooper, F. S. A. London: printed for private circulation, by T. Richards, 100, St. Martin's Lane. 1844.

8vo. One vol. Most interesting for two letters from Sterne to Hall-Stevenson respecting Sterne in France, and for Cooper's notes on the Demoniacs.

Unpublished Letters of Laurence Sterne. In *Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society*, vol. II (London, 1855-56).

Preface by John Murray (1808-92), who found the manuscripts among his father's papers. Thirteen letters—twelve from Sterne to Miss Catherine de Fourmantelle, and one from her, apparently written at Sterne's dictation, to a friend in London. Five of the letters had previously appeared in Isaac D'Israeli's *Miscellanies of Literature*, vol. I, 27-28 (London, 1840).

Three Letters forming a part of the Alfred Morrison Collection as described above. (Catalogue of the same, printed for private circulation, VI. [London], 1892.) For facsimile of the second letter, see plate 153 of the Catalogue.

Four Letters from Sterne to Lord Fauconberg. In sixteenth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. *Various Collections*, vol. II, 189-92 (London, 1903). Described above.

Single Letters:

Letter addressed to * * * *, beginning "I have received your kind letter of critical, and I will add, of parental advice." (Sterne's *Works* X, 138-141, London, 1780.) Sterne's copy of this letter on the indiscretions of *Tristram Shandy*, hitherto supposed to be spurious, forms a part of the Morgan Letter-Book. The letter as published differs considerably from the copy in Sterne's hand. In the manuscript, it bears the superscription "York, Jan. 1, 1760." See Sterne's *Letters and Miscellanies* I, 181, in *Works* (New York, 1904).

The so-called Hay Letter (*Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. LXIII, Pt. II, 587). See *Letters and Miscellanies*, I, 124-26.

Letter to George Whatley, Esq., treasurer of the London Foundling Hospital, dated March 25, 1761 (*Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, I, 406).

Letter to Dodsley on the publication of *Tristram Shandy* (T. F. Dibdin, *Reminiscences*, Pt. I, 207 (London, 1836). See *Letters and Miscellanies*, I, 127-129.

Letter to Mrs. Sterne, dated Paris, March 15, 1762. Contributed by H. A. B. to *Notes and Queries*, first series, V, 254.

Letter to Becket, his publisher, dated Coxwoud, Sept. 3, 1767. Contributed by Edward Foss to *Notes and Queries*, second series, iv, 126.

Letter to Becket, dated Paris, Oct. 19, 1765 (*Notes and Queries*, fourth series, XII, 244-45).

Verses occasion'd by hearing a Pass-Bell. In Thomas Gill's *Vallis Eboracensis*, 199-200 (London, 1852).

An Unpublished Fragment (*Fragment inédit*), addressed to Mr. Cook. In Paul Stapfer's *Laurence Sterne, sa Personne et ses Ouvrages*. (Paris, 1870.)

Collected Works. In 1780, the publishers who owned the copyrights on Sterne's books brought out "all the works of Mr. Sterne, either made public during his lifetime or since his death." Ten volumes, 8vo. A few letters, now known to be genuine, were not included. This edition of Sterne's works has been the basis of most subsequent editions. It was reissued in 1894, with the omission of many sermons and some of the letters, under the supervision of Professor Saintsbury. (6 vols., London and New York.) Additional letters are contained in the edition by Dr. J. P. Brown (4 vols., London, 1873, often reprinted). For the *Works of Laurence Sterne* (12 vols., New York, 1904; reissued in 6 vols.), the author of this biography collected and rearranged nearly all Sterne's published letters, and had transcribed all the letters of Sterne and Mrs. Draper in the British Museum. No letters, however, of the volume of 1788 were included, for they were all then held to be spurious.

INDEX

- Abuses of Conscience*, sermon, 82 and *n*, 85-86, 227, 351, 530-531.
- Acta Eruditorum*, 143.
- Adams, John, anecdote of Sterne, 229 *n*.
- Addison, Joseph, 147 and *n*, 407.
- Admonitory Letter addressed to the Rev. Mr. S———*, *An*, 265.
- Alembert, Jean le Rond d', 278.
- Anatomy of Melancholy*, *see* Burton, Robert.
- Anderson, Sir Edmund, 158.
- Answer to a Letter address'd to the Dean of York*, 162 *n*, 163, 176, 531.
- Apsley, Baron, 505, 534.
- Arbuthnot, Dr. John, *Martin Scriblerus*, 134-135.
- Aristophanes, 522.
- Aristotle, 516.
- Arms, coat of, Sterne's, 4.
- Arnaud, Abbé François, 280.
- Ash, Mrs. and Miss, 113-114 and *n*.
- Ashton, Charles, 27.
- Athenæum*, *The*, 183 *n*, 414, 489 *n*.
- Atkinson, Dr. James, 110.
- Aumale, Duc d', 289 *n*.
- Bacon, Francis, 138.
- Bagehot, Walter, on Sterne's sermons, 230; on Sterne's character, 515.
- Bagge, Charles Ernest, Baron de, 286.
- Barrymore, Countess of, wife of fifth Earl, 342.
- Basing, first Baron, 403.
- Basing, second Baron, 403, 528, 529.
- Bath, Sterne's visit to, 339-341.
- Bathurst, first Earl, introduces himself to Sterne, 200; friendship with, 216, 407, 505, 506, 511.
- Baxter, Richard, 7 and *n*, 8.
- Bayle's *Dictionary*, 260.
- Beauchamp, Lord, son of Earl of Hertford, 325.
- Beauclerk, Topham, 456.
- Becket, Thomas, Sterne's second publisher, 266, 295, 296, 312, 316, 322, 333, 350, 351 *n*, 386, 450, 460, 525, 527, 528, 532, 533, 536; at Sterne's funeral, 463; sums received from, 471; negotiations with Lydia, 474-475, 484; negotiations with Mrs. Draper, 487, 491.
- Bedford, fourth Duke of, 290, 325.
- Behn, Mrs. Aphra, novels, 29.
- Belasyse, or Bellasyse, Lord, 398.
- Berdmore, William, Preb. of York, 92, 157, 227 *n*, 524.
- Berenger, Richard, 201-202, 248, 473, 526.
- Berkeley, George, sermons, 144.
- Berkeley, Lord, 291.
- Béroalde de Verville, *Moyen de Parvenir*, 131, 133, 134, 136, 471 *n*.
- Bertram *Montfichet*, *The Life and Opinions of*, 254.
- Beveridge, William, sermons, 224.
- Bible*, Sterne's style founded on, 144, 281, 479, 518.
- Biron, Duc de, 285-286.
- Bissy, Comte de, friendship with Sterne, 275, 283-285, 324, 370.
- Blackburne, Francis, Archdeacon of Cleveland, 89, 91, 525.
- Blackburne, Lancelot, Archbishop of York, appoints Sterne to Sutton, 39; character, 67.
- Blake, Rev. John, of York, identified, 112-113; Sterne's intimate letters to, 113-115, 154, 183, 184, 515, 527.
- Blaquière, Col. John, 347.
- Blondel, *L'Art de jeter les Bombes*, 142.
- Blount, Charles, *Philostratus*, 137.
- Boddam, Mary, *see* Sclater, Mary.
- Boddam, Rawson Hart, 409.
- Bode, J. J. C., translator, 454, 462 and *n*.
- Boissy, Louis de, *Le Française à Londres*, 50 *n*, 273.
- Book without a Title-page*, *A*, 254.
- Boldero, John, of York, 100 and *n*.
- Bolingbroke's *Patriot King*, 247, 283.
- Bombay Quarterly Review*, 504 *n*.
- Bonrepos, M., of Toulouse, 311.

- Booth, George Sclater, *see* Basing, first Baron.
- Boswell, James, meets Sterne, 265; quoted, 377, 383 *n*, 394.
- Bouchet, Guillaume, *Serées*, 131, 132-133, 134, 136, 471 *n*.
- Bradshaw, John, Sterne's tutor, 27.
- Braithwaite, Dr. Mark, of York, 156, 157, 158; introduced into *A Political Romance*, 165.
- Bridges, Thomas, of York, portrait of Sterne, 110, 116.
- Broadley, Matthew, of Halifax, 19.
- Brook, Sir Robert, *Graunde Abridgement*, 138.
- Brousse et Fils, of Toulouse, 294.
- Brown, Dr. Jemmet, Bishop of Cork, 426.
- Browne, Sir Thomas, *Religio Medici*, 144.
- Bruscambille, *Pensées Factieuses*, 131, 133, 134, 471 *n*.
- Burford, Robert, 509-510.
- Burgersdicius, Francis, Sterne's burlesque of, 30.
- Burnet, Gilbert, Bishop of Salisbury, 7 and *n*, 8.
- Burney, Charles, 222.
- Burton, Dr. John, of York, Tory leader, 64; persecution by Jaques Sterne, 75-78; his books, 76, 78, 140; caricatured in *Tristram Shandy*, 80, 180, 238-240, 241; caricature by Romney, 110-111.
- Burton, Robert, Sterne's indebtedness to *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 139-140, 149, 236, 260, 264 and *n*, 334, 398 and *n*.
- Bute, third Earl of, 248, 342.
- Calais, Sterne's inn at, 361-365.
- Callis, Marmaduke, curate, 234.
- Campbell, Col. Donald, purse for Sterne's widow and daughter, 488 and *n*, 489.
- Cannon, Charles, Sterne's first tutor, 27.
- Cannon, Richard, history of Roger Sterne's regiment, 12 *n*.
- Carlyle, Alexander, 121.
- Carmontelle, Louis, portrait of Sterne, 288-289, 293, 361, 381.
- Carr, John, imitator of Sterne, 215.
- Carter, Mrs. Elizabeth, 340, 426 *n*.
- Cataneo, *Libro di Fortificare*, 141.
- Centlivre, Mrs., *Busy Body*, 312.
- Cervantes, 131, 132, 180, 245, 331, 401, 435, 523.
- Chamfort, S. R. N. de, 326.
- Chapman, Richard, of Newburgh Priory, 258, 294, 315.
- Chapone, Hester, 499.
- Chappelow, Rev. Leonard, 197.
- Charles I., King, 6, 9-10.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 279, 516.
- Cheap, Rev. Andrew, Sterne's successor at Sutton, 468; suit for dilapidations, 472.
- Chesterfield, fourth Earl of, 199, 200, 361.
- Choiseul, Duc de, grants Sterne passports, 275, 284, 290; attracted to Sterne, 285; *also* 370.
- Cholmley, Nathaniel, 195, 198, 204, 207.
- Christopher Wagstaffe, *The Life and Adventures of*, 267.
- Churchill, Charles, 324 *n*.
- Cibber, Colley, 279, 312.
- Clairon, Mlle., 273, 274.
- Clark, Sir John, 501, 504, 510.
- Clayton, Robert, Bishop of Cork, 219.
- Clement, Père Denis Xavier, 274-275.
- Clockmaker's Outcry against the Author of * * * Tristram Shandy, The*, 213.
- Clonmel, Ireland, birthplace of Laurence Sterne, 13, 16, 94.
- Clough, John, of York, 162.
- Clüver, Philipp, *Germania Antiqua*, burlesque of, 33.
- Coke, Lady Mary, on Sterne's death, 461 and *n*.
- Colebrooks, Mr., 297.
- Coleridge, S. T., on Sterne, 399, 520.
- Colley, Launcelot, curate, 346.
- Collier, Marmaduke, curate, 234, 346.
- Collignon, Dr. Charles, dissector of Sterne's body, 464, 465.
- Colman, George, 425.
- Combe, William, acquaintance with Mrs. Draper, 507; *Letters Supposed to have been Written by Yorick and Eliza*, 508; as probable editor of Sterne's letters, 534, 535.
- Congreve, William, plays, 29.
- Conti, Prince de, 286, 324.
- Cooper, W. D., 283 *n*, 311 *n*, 535.
- Cornelys, Mrs. Theresa, her assemblies, 397-398, 402, 441-442.
- Cosway, Richard, portrait of Mrs. Draper, 407.
- Cowper, Rev. Charles, Preb. of York, 92, 116, 157.
- Cowper, George Nassau Cowper, third Earl of, meets Sterne, 379.

- Cowper, Lady Georgiana, 224.
 Cowper, Mr., of London, 343.
 Cox, Thomas, *History of the Grammar School at Heath*, 23 n.
 Coxwold, or Coxwoud, Sterne appointed curate of, 200; described, 235, 257-260, 422. *See also* Shandy Hall.
 Cradock, Joseph, 215 and n.
 Craufurd, John, of Errol, in Paris with Sterne, 370-371; anecdote, 371-372; appointment with Sterne, 439; dinner on day of Sterne's death, 461.
 Crazy Castle, *see* Skelton Castle.
 Crazy Tales, 120, 128-129, 151, 299, 309, 310, 336 n.
 Cream of Jest, The, or The Wits Outwitted, 214.
 Crébillon, C. P. Jolyot de, comic agreement with Sterne, 288; subscribes to *Sermons*, 350.
 Critical Review on *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), 193; (vols. III-IV), 252-253; (vols. V-VI), 267-268 and n; (vols. VII-VIII), 335 and n; (vol. IX), 400; on *Sermons* (vols. I-II), 223-224; on *Sentimental Journey*, 452.
 Croft, family of, 66.
 Croft, Henrietta, 66.
 Croft, John, of York, *Anecdotes of Sterne*, quoted or referred to, 43 and n, 54, 56, 65, 72, 102, 131, 181-182, 184, 205, 209, 229, 249, 314, 462, 471.
 Croft, Stephen, of Stillington, friendship with Sterne, 65-66, 105, 107, 109, 207; rescues *Tristram Shandy* from the flames, 179; takes Sterne to London, 195, 198, 200, 209; Sterne's letters to, 205, 212, 238, 246, 248, 250, 253, 493; Sterne's attorney, 294; enclosing commons, 333, 387; purchases the Sterne lands at Sutton, 490.
 Cromwell, Oliver, 6, 36.
 Crossley, James, 136 n.
 Cumberland, Duke of, 69-70.
 Cumberland Regiment of Foot, *see* Thirty-Fourth or Cumberland Regiment of Foot.
 Cunningham, Allan, on Sterne's death, 459 and n.
 Cunningham (Conyngham), Francis Burton, second Baron, 339.
 Custodie, Jacob, registrar, 92.
 Dance, Nathaniel, bust of Sterne, 381.
 Dante, 516.
 Danvers, Sir Charles, 311, 392.
 Dashwood, Sir Francis, 122, 123, 248, 249.
 Davies, Robert, *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon*, 9 n; *Memoir of Dr. John Burton*, 77 n; *Memoir of York Press*, 74 and n, 164, 182.
 Dawson, Lady Anne, 426.
 Dealtry, Dr. John, of York, 116, 183, 347.
 Deffand, Mme. du, 371.
 Defoe, Daniel, quoted, 18 and n, 41, 42 and n; *Robinson Crusoe*, 453.
 Delany, Mrs. Mary, 219 and n, 224.
 Delany, Patrick, 219.
 Delaval, Francis Drake, 249.
 Delavals, 395 and n, 439.
 Demoniacs, 122-129, 309, 320, 416, 535.
 Dessein, M., a real person, 360, 361-363; Sterne at his inn, 363-365.
 Dewes, Mrs. John, 219 and n, 224.
 Dibdin, T. F., 110 and n, 536.
 Diderot, Denis, *Natural Son (Le Fils Naturel)*, 274, 279; friendship with Sterne, 278-279, 287, 326, 370; *Jacques le Fataliste*, 279; subscribes to *Sermons*, 350; compared with Sterne, 518.
 Dillon, J. T., 290, 406, 419.
 Ditchfield, P. H., *Parish Clerk*, 245 n.
 Dodington, George Bubb, Baron Melcombe, 122, 249.
 Dodsley, Robert, at first refuses *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), 179-180, 181, 182, 183; publishes second edition, 202-203, 532; agreements with Sterne, 195, 208, 221; sums paid to Sterne, 471.
 Dormer, Charles Cottrell, 207.
 Douglas, J., *Bombay and Western India*, 488 n, 496 n, 504 n, 510 n.
 Drake, Dr. Francis, 74-75.
 Draper, Daniel, early career in India, 405; visit to England with his wife and children, 405; Sterne's letter to, 424; Tellicherry, 485; Surat, 496; removed from his post, 496-497; quarrel with his wife, 497-498; her elopement, 500, 504.
 Draper, Mrs. Elizabeth (wife of Daniel Draper), family history, 403-404; birth at Anjengo, 404; education, 404; marriage, 405; children, 405, 410, 486; visit to England, 405 *et seq.*; meeting with Sterne at Mrs. James's, 406; excursions together, 407; her portraits, 407, 410;

- summons home, 408; Sterne's infatuation, 408-412, 440, 519, 520; her departure for India, 411; Sterne's *Journal to Eliza*, 412-432; her life at Bombay and Tellicherry, 485-486; alarmed by Mrs. Sterne's threat to publish her letters to Sterne, 486-487; raises a purse for Mrs. Sterne, 487-488; at Surat, 496; return to Bombay, 496-497; disagreement with her husband, 497-498, 500; a Blue-Stocking, 498-499; friends, 499-500; meets Abbé Raynal, 500; elopement with Sir John Clark, 500-501; letter in justification of conduct, 501-503 and *n*; at Masulipatam, 503-505; return to England, 505; publishes letters from Sterne, 491, 505-506; attentions from Wilkes, 506, Combe and Raynal, 507; death, 507; tomb, 507-508; eulogy by Raynal, 500, 508-509; other tributes, 509-510; unpublished letters, 528-530; *also* 343, 457, 494.
- Draper, Sir William, 405.
- Drummond, Robert Hays, Archbishop of York, 259; leave of absence granted Sterne, 268, 289, 313-314; anonymous letter against Sterne, 399-400; Sterne's visits to, 421, 425.
- Dryden, John, 144.
- Dumesnil, Mlle. Marie Françoise, 273.
- Dunton, John, *Voyage Round the World*, 135-136 and *n*, 267.
- D'Urfev, Tom, *An Essay towards the Theory of the Intelligible World*, 135; compared with Sterne, 218.
- Dutens, Louis, anecdote of Sterne, 290-292 and *n*.
- Eachard, John, 27, 32 *n*.
- Edgcumbe, Emma Gilbert, Countess of, 160, 246, 259, 473.
- Edgcumbe, Richard, second Baron, 199.
- Editions of Sterne's works, described, 530-537.
- Edmundsons, 295, 299.
- Effingham, third Earl of, 332, 344, 347, 349.
- Eglinton, Lord, 461.
- Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath, sermon, 84-85, 184, 227, 530.
- Eliza, *see* Draper, Mrs. Elizabeth.
- Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, 183, 531.
- Epinay, Mme. d', 384.
- Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, 127.
- Erasmus, *Colloquia*, 137, 264, 532.
- Ernulf, Bishop of Rochester, *Textus Roffensis*, 138, 236, 239, 240, 252.
- Errington, Mr., with Sterne in Italy, 380, 381, 382, 386.
- European Magazine*, 111 *n*, 385 *n*.
- Eustace, Dr., of North Carolina, letter and walking-stick, 443-444, 534.
- Explanatory Remarks upon * * ** *Tristram Shandy*, 213-214.
- Fagniani, Marchesa, Sterne's encounter with at Milan, 378-379.
- Fairfax, Thomas, Lord, 53 and *n*.
- Faldoni, G. A., engraver, 111.
- Farmer, Richard, 218-219.
- Fauconberg, Thomas, first Earl of, patron, 92, 105, 106, 235; nominates Sterne to Coxwold, 200; grants Sterne leave of absence, 289; Sterne sends him wine, 318; *also* 264, 394, 396, 398, 463, 468, 469, 527, 536.
- Felix, Father, original of Father Lorenzo, 363-364.
- Fenton, Mrs., of London, 473.
- Ferdinand, Prince, of Brunswick, 207, 247.
- Ferguson, Mrs., 342, 440, 519, 526.
- Ferriar, John, *Illustrations of Sterne*, 132 *n*; on Sterne's death, 459 *n*.
- Fielding, Henry, compared with Sterne, 401, 435, 523.
- Fitzgerald, Percy, *Life of Sterne*, 23-24 and *n*; 114, 164. *See also* the Preface.
- Fitzmaurice, Dr., 318.
- Fitzmaurice, Thomas, 442 *n*.
- Fitzwilliam, second Earl of, 332.
- Fizes, Dr. Antoine, of Montpellier, 319, 321-322.
- Flud, Robert, *Utrius Cosmii * * ** *Historia*, 138.
- Foley, Mr., Sterne's banker at Paris, 294, 312, 315-316, 321, 322, 331, 338, 350, 361, 370, 428, 526.
- Fontenelle, *Pluralité des Mondes*, 146, 148.
- Foote, Samuel, 249, 252, 265; *Trip to Calais*, 362; in Paris with Sterne, 370, 371.
- Forbes, James, *Oriental Memoirs*, 500 and *n*, 509.
- Fothergill, Marmaduke, of York, 117, 179, 295; anecdote of Sterne, 347; letters from Sterne, 473.
- Fountayne, John, Dean of York, at Cambridge with Sterne, 28; appointed Dean of York, 83; aids Sterne, 87, 89, 92-93, 94, 96, 105,

- 155, 156; quarrel with Dr. Topham, 154-164; pamphlet against Topham, 163; aided by Sterne, 158-159, 163-164; introduced into *A Political Romance*, 165-167, 169; purchases Sterne's lands at Sutton, 490.
- Fourmantelle, Miss Catherine, Sterne's flirtation with, 185-187, 196, 199, 203-204, 275, 519, 535; appears as Jenny in *Tristram Shandy*, 401.
- Fox, Charles James, 273, 324.
- Fox, Stephen, 273, 280, 324.
- Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais*, 492.
- Francavilla, Princess, 380.
- Franklin, Benjamin, 255, 394.
- Frazer, J. B., 509.
- Frénais, J. P., translator, 454, 455 n.
- Fumel, Comtesse de, of Toulouse, 311.
- Funeral Discourse occasioned by the much lamented Death of Mr. Yorick*, A, 264.
- "Gabriel John," *see* D'Urfey, Tom.
- Gainsborough, Thomas, portrait of Sterne, 341 and n, 361, 513; portrait of Ignatius Sancho, 390.
- Galiani, Abbé, *bon mot* of Sterne, 384 and n.
- Galileo, 143.
- Gambier, Mr., 499-500.
- Garat, D. J., 282 n, 287, 336.
- Gardes, J. F., of Albi, 490.
- Garland, Nathaniel, 124, 320.
- Garrick, David, praises *Tristram Shandy*, 194; introduces Sterne to London society, 196 and n, 198, 214, 511, 514; subscriber to *Sermons*, 222; friendship with Sterne, 248, 251; lends Sterne £20, 268; receives account of Sterne's reception in Paris, 273-274, 275-276, 283, 287; misunderstanding between Garrick and Sterne, 330; renewal of intimacy, 337-338, 344; *Cymon*, 392-393; at Skelton with Sterne, 425; Sterne's death announced to, 461; epitaph for Sterne's tomb, 466, 492; receives dedication of Sterne's letters, 491, 492; *also* 394, 473, 493, 528, 534.
- Garrick, Mrs., regard for Sterne, 338, 511; *also* 519.
- Gay, John, *Beggar's Opera*, 49, 68 and n.
- Gazette Littéraire*, 276, 285 n.
- General Advertiser*, 85 n.
- Gent, Thomas, York printer, 52 and n, 72 and n.
- Gentleman's Magazine*, 268.
- Geoffrin, Mme. Marie Thérèse, 279, 282.
- George III., King, 247, 248, 259, 394; as Asa in Sterne's *Sermons*, 478.
- Gibbs, Thomas Washbourne, of Bath, 413-414, 525.
- Gilbert, Emma, daughter of Archbishop Gilbert, *see* Edgcumbe, Countess of.
- Gilbert, John, Archbishop of York, appointment, 159; his part in quarrel between Dean Fountayne and Dr. Topham, 160-161, 162-163; introduced into *A Political Romance*, 167-169; friendly to Sterne, 179, 200; death, 259.
- Gillfillan, John, York printer, 73, 74.
- Gill, Thomas, *Vallis Eboracensis*, 39; Sterne's *Unknown World*, 149-151, 536.
- Goethe, on Sterne, 217, 545.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, attack on Sterne, 217-218; meets Sterne, 265.
- Gordon, Charles, fourth Earl of Aboyne, Sterne chaplain to, 54.
- Gordon, Lord William, 371.
- Gore, Mrs., 339.
- Gorecius, *Descriptio Belli Ivoniae*, 141.
- Graeme, Miss Elizabeth, of Philadelphia, meets Sterne, 347-348.
- Grafton, third Duke of, subscriber to *Sentimental Journey*, 452; receives news of Sterne's death, 461.
- Granby, Marquis of, 332.
- Gray, Sir James, 461.
- Gray, Thomas, on Hall-Stevenson, 119; on Sterne, 195, 203, 216 and n, 224 and n.
- Greene, Rev. Thomas, 464.
- Gresset's *Ver-Vert*, 336 and n.
- Grey, Rev. Zachary, edition of *Hudibras*, 137, 197.
- Griffith, Richard, *The Koran*, 490-491 and n.
- Griffiths, Ralph, *see* *Monthly Review*.
- Gunter, *Sines and Tangents*, 141.
- Hafen Slawkenbergius, The Life and Amours of*, 265.
- Hailstone, Edward, of Bradford, 164.
- Halifax, second Earl of, 248.
- Halifax grammar schools, Sterne's education there, 17-25.
- Hall, George Lawson, 125.

- Hall, Dr. Joseph, Sterne's use of in sermons, 131, 144, 226, 227, 353, 356.
- Hall-Stevenson, John, *see* Stevenson, John Hall.
- Hamilton, Elizabeth Gunning, Duchess of, Sterne's remark on, 393.
- Hannah, Sterne's correspondence with, 440.
- Hanxwell, Rev. Richard, 53.
- Harland, family of, 63.
- Harland, Philip, of Sutton, 39; relations with Sterne, 63-65, 105, 106, 350; ridiculed in *Tristram Shandy*, 64, 244.
- Harland, Richard, of York, sells land to Sterne, 58, 63 and *n*, 490.
- Harris, James, *Hermes*, 215.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, on Mrs. Sterne's portrait, 109-110 and *n*.
- Heath Grammar School, 19; traditions of Sterne's attendance at, 19-21; *History* of, 23 *n*.
- Hebert, Agnes, *see* Sterne, Agnes.
- Heine, H., 454; on Sterne, 455 and *n*.
- Herbert, George, *Outlandish Proverbs*, 450 and *n*.
- Herring, Thomas, Archbishop of York, 68 and *n*; Association for Defence of Kingdom, 69 and *n*; attacks on Church of Rome, 81 and *n*; translated to Canterbury, 82.
- Herring, William, Chancellor of York, 89, 90, 92, 227 *n*, 524.
- Hertford, Earl of, Ambassador to Paris, 325; invites Sterne to preach at embassy, 326-328; letter of introduction, 382.
- Hervey, John, Lord, 341.
- Hesselridge, Thomas, 349, 350, 528.
- Hewitt, William, a Demoniac, 126; at Toulouse with Sterne, 294, 309, 311, 312; at Montpellier, 318; at Lyons, 320.
- Hildesley, Mark, Bishop of Man, on Sterne, 219-220.
- Hildyard, John, York bookseller, 88, 89-91, 182, 530, 531, 532.
- Hill, G. B., *Johnsonian Miscellanies* 215 *n*.
- Hill, Dr. John, biographical sketch of Sterne, 204-206, 207, 210, 211.
- Hinde, Captain, original of uncle Toby, 188.
- Hinxman, John, York bookseller, 181, 182, 183.
- Hipperholme Grammar School, 19; traditions of Sterne's attendance at, 21-23.
- History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*, *see* *Political Romance*, A.
- History of his own Times*, Burnet's, 7 and *n*.
- Hitch, Rev. Robert, Preb. of York, 52, 72.
- Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, 32, 33.
- Hogarth, William, *Analysis of Beauty*, 108; *Politician*, 109; illustrations to *Tristram Shandy*, 202, 251, 480; also 222, 514, 532.
- Holbach, Paul Thiry, Baron d', friendship with Sterne, 275, 277-278, 281, 324, 326, 370; also 350, 518.
- Holbein, Hans, 137.
- Holland, Henry Fox, first Baron, 201, 273.
- Home, John, *Siege of Aquileia*, 196; *Douglas*, 328.
- Homer, Sterne's fondness for, 24-25, 29.
- Horace, Sterne's favourite Latin author, 24; burlesqued, 30; motto from, 264, 532.
- Horne-Tooke, John, *see* Tooke, John Horne.
- Horsley, George, 499, 501.
- Howe, Caroline, 461.
- Hudson, A. H., of York, on Sterne's letters to Blake, 114.
- Human Understanding, The*, *see* Locke, John.
- Hume, David, secretary to English embassy at Paris, 325-326 and *n*, 370; quizzes Sterne on miracles, 328; laments Sterne's death, 461; also 338.
- Hurd, Richard, Bishop of Worcester, 267.
- Hurdis, Thomas, Preb. of York, 116.
- Hutton, Matthew, Archbishop of York, appointment, 82; unfriendly towards Sterne, 87, 91; favours Dr. Topham in the great quarrel, 155, 157, 159; introduced into A *Political Romance*, 165-166.
- Hyder Ali, 486, 503.
- Impromptu, An*, 492.
- Ireland, the Sternes of, 4; *see also* Clonmel.
- Irvine, Andrew ("Paddy"), 124, 126.
- Jackson, Christopher, of Halifax, 21.

- James, Mrs. Anne (wife of Commodore James), friendship with Sterne, 396, 417-418, 440, 441-442, 456, 519; Sterne's last letter to, 458-459, 493; introduces him to Mrs. Draper, 403; friendship with Mrs. Draper, 405, 407, 410; letters from Mrs. Draper, 413, 487, 497-498; *also* 429, 431, 434, 437, 438, 484, 505, 525.
- James, Commodore William, career, 395; marriage, 396; Sterne's intimacy with, 396; with Sterne before death, 458, 460; receives news of Sterne's death, 461; at Sterne's funeral, 463.
- Jamme, Dr. Alexandre Auguste, of Toulouse, 311; letter to, 381, 528.
- Jaques, family of, ancestors of Laurence Sterne, 9-10.
- Jaques, Lady Mary, 9-10.
- Jaques, Mary, granddaughter of the preceding, *see* Sterne, Mary.
- Jaques, Sir Roger, grandfather of Mary Sterne, 9, 66.
- Jaques, Roger, brother of Mary Sterne, 10.
- Jesus College, Cambridge, Sterne's education there, 26-35 and *n*.
- John of Salisbury, 238, 532.
- Johnson, Dr. Samuel, *Rasselas*, 144, 181; on Sterne, 218 and *n*, 224-225; meeting between Sterne and Johnson, 265-266; on Father Felix, 364; *also* 340, 456.
- Johnstone, Charles, *Chrysal*, 123 *n*.
- Journal Encyclopédique*, on *Tristram Shandy*, 276.
- Journal to Eliza*, manuscript, 412-414, 487, 525; preface, 414-415; contents, 415 *et seq.*; as emotional background to *Sentimental Journey*, 433-435.
- Jubb, Henry, York apothecary, 79.
- Jubb, Robert, York notary, 470.
- Keller, Frederick, Sterne's association with, 27, 33.
- Kilner, James, curate, 294, 332-333.
- Kingsley, Charles, 523.
- Kirk, Thomas, of Cookridge, 44.
- Koran, The*, *see* Griffith, Richard.
- Lady's Magazine*, 490.
- La Fleur, Sterne's valet, a real person, 360, 366-367, 368, 372, 373, 384-385 and *n*.
- Lamb, Charles, 433.
- Lamberti, Marquise de, 365.
- Lansdowne, first Marquis of, *see* Shelburne, Earl of.
- La Popelinière, A. J. J., attentions to Sterne, 286, 302.
- Lascelles, "Bombay," 425.
- Lascelles, Edwin, M. P., 442 and *n*.
- Lascelles, Rev. Robert ("Panty"), 124, 126, 128.
- Laud, William, Archbishop of Canterbury, 5-6, 134 *n*.
- Lawrence, Dr. Thomas, 194 *n*.
- Lee, ———, of York, contributes £100 to the publication of *Tristram Shandy*, 181, 183.
- Lee, Arthur, of Virginia, Sterne's friendship with, 393, and *n*, 394, 422, 433, 440.
- Lee, Col. Charles, 125-126.
- Lee, Sidney, article on Sterne in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, quoted or referred to, 54, 164, and Preface.
- Leightonhouse, Walter, Preb. of Lincoln, Sterne's plagiarisms from, 476-477 and *n*.
- Lepell, Lady, *see* Mulgrave, Baroness.
- Lepinasse, Mlle. de, 282.
- Lessing, coins *empfindsam* for *sentimental*, 454; on Sterne's death, 462, 512.
- Letter address'd to * * * the Dean of York*, A, 163, 531.
- Letter from a Methodist Preacher to Mr. Sterne*, 214.
- Letter from the Rev. George Whitfield, B.A., to the Rev. Laurence Sterne*, 214.
- Letters from Eliza to Yorick* (spurious), 506.
- Letters from Yorick to Eliza*, 505-506, 534.
- Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne*, 492-495, 534-535.
- Levett, Rev. Richard, Preb. of York, 53 and *n*.
- Life of William III.* (anonymous), 140.
- Light, Miss, companion of Mrs. Draper, 410.
- Limory, G., of Albi, 490.
- Lister, Thomas, of Heath Grammar School, 20, 21, 26.
- Lloyd, Robert, publishes premature elegy on Sterne, 330-331.
- Lloyd's Evening Post*, 254, 394 *n*, 399, 411 *n*.
- Locke, John, *Human Understanding*, Sterne's admiration for, 33, 236, 279, 282, 518.

- Loménie de Brienne, 308.
London Chronicle, 117 *n*, 177 *n*, 182, 195, 268, 269, 285 *n*, 324 *n*, 325 *n*, 380, 452 *n*, 531-532.
London Evening Post, 74, 77.
London Magazine, on *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), 193; (vols. III-IV), 251; (vols. V-VI), 268.
 London, Sterne's visits to, 127-128, 194-209, 246-256, 265-268, 330-331, 337-343, 350, 384, 392-398, 403, *et seq.*, 441-443, 456-459.
 Longinus, praised, 30.
 Loreni, on fortifications, 141.
 Lucian, *Dialogues*, 131, 132; *also* 331, 522.
 Lully, Raymond, 32, 138.
 Lumley, family of, 42-45 and *n*.
 Lumley, Elizabeth, *see* Sterne, Elizabeth (wife of Laurence).
 Lumley, Lydia, mother of Mrs. Sterne, 44-45.
 Lumley, Lydia, sister of Mrs. Sterne, 44, 45.
 Lumley, Robert, father of Mrs. Sterne, 43.
 Luther, Martin, 137, 241.
 Lyons, Sterne at, 301-304.
 Lyttelton, George, first Baron, 199-200, 216, 383.
 Lyttelton, Lady Mary, correspondence with Sterne, 212, 473, 526.
- Macalister, Dr. Alexander, on disposition of Sterne's body, 465 and *n*.
 Macartney, Sir George, in Paris with Sterne, 273, 280; presents Sterne with gold snuff box, 423; appointment with, 439; *also* 442, 452.
 Macarty, Abbé, of Toulouse, 294, 296, 308, 310.
 Macdonald, Sir James, with Sterne in Italy, 377-378, 379, 380, 381, 386; illness and death, 382-383.
 Macdonald, John, footman, 372 *n*; present at Sterne's death, 461 and *n*.
 Macdonald, Lady Margaret, 383.
 Mackenzie, Dr. James, 140.
Macmillan's Magazine, quoted, 188.
 Malone, Edmond, with Mrs. Sterne at Marseilles, 391 and *n*; on Sterne's death, 459 and *n*.
 Malthus, *Pratique de la Guerre*, 143.
 Mann, Sir Horace, 217; meets Sterne, 379 and *n*.
 Manuscripts of Sterne, described, 524-528. *See also* the Preface.
 March, third Earl of (afterwards fourth Duke of Queensberry), Sterne's associations with, 395, 461.
 Marivaux, Pierre de, 131.
 Marolois, *Fortification ou Architecture Militaire*, 142.
 Mathews, Charles, lays Sterne's ghost, 510.
 Maynard, Sir William, fourth Baronet, 349, 350.
 Mead, Dr. Richard, in *Tristram Shandy*, 193-194.
 Meadows, Mrs., 311, 316, 345-346, 534.
 Medalle, Jean Baptiste Alexandre de, husband of Lydia Sterne, 488-489 and *n*, 490.
 Medalle, Mrs., *see* Sterne, Lydia.
 Medmenham Abbey, 122-123 and *n*, 249.
 Melcombe Regis, Lord, *see* Dodington, George Bubb.
 Mihill, Eliza, 501.
 Miller, Joe, *Jests*, 29.
 Mills, Mr., London merchant, 316, 322, 527.
 Milner, Abraham, usher at Heath grammar school, 20.
 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 49; *also* 481.
 Monsey, Dr. Messenger, 205.
 Montagu, Mrs. Elizabeth, 340, 498.
 Montagu, George, fourth Duke of, 388, 402.
 Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, 506.
 Montaigne, 131; Sterne's indebtedness to, 134 and *n*.
Monthly Repository, *The*, 103 *n*, 255 *n*.
Monthly Review, on *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), 193; (vols. III-IV), 251-252; (vols. V-VI), 268 and *n*; (vols. VII-VIII), 336; *Sermons* (vols. I-II), 222-223; *Sentimental Journey*, 452-453.
 Montpellier, Sterne's winter at, 317-322.
 Montreuil, Sterne's night at, 365-367.
 Moor or Moore, Mrs., of Bath, 339, 473.
 Moore, Cecil, *History of St. George's Chapel*, 465 *n*.
 Moore, Zachary, a Demoniac, 125 and *n*, 129.
 Morellet, Abbé André, 277, 287, 384 *n*.
 Morgan Manuscripts, 134 *n*, 212 *n*, 227 *n*, 236 *n*, 340 *n*, 342 *n*, 388 *n*, 392 *n*, 473 *n*, 517 *n*, 521 *n*, 526-527. *See also* the Preface.
 Mulgrave, second Baron, 341.
 Mulgrave, Baroness, 341-342.

- Murphy, Arthur, *School for Guardians*, 393.
- Murray, John, publisher, 185 and *n*, 535.
- Musgrave, Rev. Richard, Vicar of Stillington, 53.
- Napier, *Logarithms*, 141.
- Naples, Sterne's winter at, 380-381.
- Needham, J. T., 290.
- Newcastle, Duke of, 83, 84.
- Newcastle, Margaret, Duchess of, 499.
- New Monthly Magazine*, 219 *n*, 265 *n*.
- Newman, J. H., on Sterne's eloquence, 479 and *n*.
- Newton, John, 32, 33.
- Newton, Dr. Thomas, Bishop of Bristol, 197.
- Newton, Rev. Thomas, successor of Sterne at Coxwold, 468.
- Nicholls, Dr. Frank, 194.
- Nollekens, Joseph, bust of Sterne, 381 and *n*; replica, 469; also Preface.
- Northumberland, Duchess of, 248.
- Notes and Queries*, 109 *n*, 111 *n*, 265 *n*, 367 *n*, 392 *n*, 438 *n*, 451 *n*, 459 *n*, 469 *n*.
- Nunehams, the, of Nuneham Hall, friends of Mrs. Draper, 406, 410, 505.
- Oglethorpe, J. E., 119.
- Orbessan, Baron d', of Toulouse, 311.
- Ord, J. W., *History of Cleveland*, 119 *n*, 125 *n*.
- Original Letters of the late Rev. Laurence Sterne*, 194 *n*, 328 *n*, 535.
- Orléans, Duc d', 288.
- Orme, Robert, *History of the British Nation in India*, 395 and *n*, 396.
- Osbaldeston, Richard, Dean of York, marries Sterne, 49; Sterne's sermon dedicated to, 67-68; translated to Carlisle, 82-83.
- Ossory, Lord, *see* Upper Ossory, second Earl.
- Ovid, read by Sterne at school, 24.
- Ozell, John, translator of Rabelais, Sterne's indebtedness to, 132 and *n*, 236, 238 and *n*, 241 and *n*, 260.
- Pagan, Comte de, *Traité des Fortifications*, 142.
- Panchaud, M., Sterne's banker at Paris, 294, 350, 370, 376, 382, 386, 387, 391, 399, 402, 428, 431, 452, 526, 527; failure, 482, 483.
- Panchaud, Mlle., 297.
- Paris, Sterne's first visit, 272-292; second visit, 323-329; third visit, 367-372; last visit, 384.
- Pedigree of Sterne family, 11 *n*.
- Pelletière, Etienne Michel, 275.
- Pennyman, Sir William, high sheriff, Sterne chaplain to, 85, 86, 93.
- Peploe, Samuel, Bishop of Chester, ordains Sterne priest, 38.
- Percy, Lady Anne, Sterne's friendship with, 342-343 and *n*, 344, 519.
- Percy, Hugh (Earl Percy), 342.
- Peters, Rev. Charles, 197.
- Pickering, Dr. Thomas, uncle of Mrs. Draper, 404, 409; his wife Elizabeth, 404, 485, 528, 529.
- Piganiol de la Force, *Nouveau Voyage en France*, used by Sterne, 300, 302, 335.
- Pigott, William, Vicar of St. Ives, 36.
- Pindar, Sterne's opinion of, 29.
- Piozzi, Mrs. Hester Lynch, *Journey through France*, 363-364, 365 and *n*.
- Pitt, William, dedication of *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), 202-203, 532; Sterne's admiration for, 247, 248, 251; letters of introduction, 268, 277, 382; dedication of last vol. of *Tristram Shandy*, 399.
- Pliny, 334, 532.
- Political Romance*, A, its occasion, 154-164; described, 164-177; *Key* to same, 169-173, 188-189; burned, 177, 178; editions of, 531, 533, 534.
- Poole, John, dramatist, 360 *n*.
- Pope, Alexander, *Essay on Man*, 49, 145-146, 153; *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 135; *Dying Christian*, 149; *Imitations of Horace*, 244; works, 279; also 407.
- Portland, third Duke of, meets Sterne, 379.
- Portraits of Sterne, by Ramsay, 34, 35 *n*; Bridges, 110; Steele, 110; Reynolds, 201 and *n*, 221, 253-254, 513; Carmontelle, 288-289, 293; a second portrait by Reynolds, 331 and *n*; Gainsborough, 341 and *n*, 513; the Nollekens bust, 381 and *n*; Dance's bust, 381. For later portraits *see* the Preface.
- Posthumous Works of a late Celebrated Genius*, *see* Griffith, Richard.
- Powell, William, actor, 337.
- Pretender, the Young, 68-69, 74, 78, 518.
- Préville, Pierre Louis, 273.
- Price, David, *Memoirs*, 405 *n*.

- Prior, James, 391 *n*, 407.
 Pryce, George, *Popular History of Bristol*, 507 *n*, 508 *n*.
Public Advertiser, 256 *n*, 398 *n*.
Public Ledger, 211, 217, 399, 400.
 Pufendorf, Samuel, *Law of Nature*, burlesqued, 32-33.
- Queensberry, fourth Duke of, *see* March, third Earl of.
- Rabelais, Sterne's first acquaintance with, 28-29; indebtedness to, 132 and *n*, 136, 173, 193, 236, 241 and *n*, 245, 252, 260, 268, 492; *also* 317, 331. *See* Ozell, John.
 Radcliffe, Ann, buried near Sterne, 465.
 Rainbowe, Edward, Bishop of Carlisle, 8.
 Ramelli, *Le Diverse ed Artificiose Machine*, 141.
 Ramsay, Allan, portrait of Sterne, 34, 35 *n*.
 Ravenet, S. F., engraver, 201, 221, 251, 532.
 Rawdon, family of, ancestors of Laurence Sterne, 9-10.
 Rawdon, Laurence, father of Lady Mary Jaques, 9, 17.
 Rawdon, Marmaduke, brother of Lady Mary Jaques, 9 and *n*.
 Rawdon, Mary, *see* Jaques, Lady Mary.
 Ray, Mr., Sterne's banker at Montpellier, 315, 318, 322.
 Raynal, Abbé, G. T. F., friendship with Mrs. Draper, 500 and *n*, 507; eulogy on Mrs. Draper, 508-509 and *n*.
 Reed, Isaac, 226, 227 *n*.
Reliquiæ Baxterianæ, quoted, 7 *n*, 8.
Reply to the Answer to a Letter lately addressed to the Dean of York, A, 163-164, 174, 531.
 Reynolds, Frederic, quoted, 161 and *n*, 362-363.
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, first portrait of Sterne, 201 and *n*, 221, 253, 361, 362, 513; subscriber to *Sermons*, 222; in *Tristram Shandy*, 251; second portrait of Sterne, 331 and *n*; with Sterne before death, 459 *n*, 460 and *n*; *also* 199, 514.
 Reynolds, Richard, Bishop of Lincoln, ordains Sterne deacon, 36.
 Ricard, or Ricord, Arthur, of York, 100 and *n*, 470.
- Richardson, Samuel, on Sterne, 219-220; contrasted with, 516.
 Rivers, George Pitt, first Baron, 290.
Robinson Crusoe, 453.
 Rochester's poems, 29, 144.
 Rochford, fourth Earl of, 322.
 Rockingham, second Marquis of, 199, 514; takes Sterne to Windsor, 207-208; at York races, 332.
 Rodd, Thomas, bookseller, 136 *n*.
 Rolle, Richard, of Hampole, 263.
 Rome, Sterne's visit to, 379-380, 381-382.
 Romney, George, 110, 111.
 Rousseau, J. J., 278, 283, 320; Sterne's projected visit to, 323.
 Roxburgh, third Duke of, 461.
Royal Female Magazine, 204, 207.
 Rutland, third Duke of, 248.
- Sade, Abbé de, friendship with Mrs. Sterne and daughter, 391.
 St. Ives, Sterne's curacy, 36.
St. James's Chronicle, 72-73, 268, 269, 270, 380 *n*, 389 *n*, 398 *n*, 459 *n*, 464 *n*.
 Sancho, Ignatius, correspondence with Sterne, 387-388, 439, 526; portrait by Gainsborough, 390; obtains subscribers to Sterne's *Sermons*, 402.
 Sandwich, fourth Earl of, 122, 123.
 Scarborough, Sterne's visits to, 118, 332, 426.
 Scarron, Paul, 403, 435.
 Sclater, family of, 403-404.
 Sclater, Elizabeth, *see* Draper, Mrs. Elizabeth.
 Sclater, Elizabeth, cousin of Mrs. Draper, 404, 528-529.
 Sclater, Louisa, sister of Mrs. Draper, 404, 485.
 Sclater, Mary, sister of Mrs. Draper, 404, 409, 529.
 Sclater, May, father of Mrs. Draper, 404, 530.
 Sclater, Thomas Mathew, cousin of Mrs. Draper, their early friendship, 404, 405; receives Sterne's first letter to Mrs. Draper, 406; later letters from Mrs. Draper, 496 and *n*, 504-505, 507, 529.
 Scott, Rev. George, of Coxwold, 149.
 Selwin, Mr., banker, 294.
 Selwyn, George Augustus, attentions to Sterne, 442-443.
Sentimental Journey, as autobiography, 360, *et seq.*; relation to *Journal to Eliza*, 433-435; relation to Smollett's

- Travels*, 435-437; purpose, 437; composition, 432, 437-438; manuscript, 445-450, 524; published in two styles, 450; "Advertisement", 451 and *n*; subscribers, 401-402, 451-452; reception, 452-453; second edition, 452 *n*; translations, 453-454; comments abroad, 454-455; continued by Hall-Stevenson, 480.
- Sentimental Magazine, The*, 490.
- Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (vols. I-II), agreement with Dodsley, 195, 208, 220-221; published, 221; preface, 221-222; attacked for title-page, 222-223; praised for eloquence, 223-225; not written for publication, 88-89, 225, 226-227 and *n*, 228-229; their character, 230-232; (vols. III-IV), prepared for the press, 313, 344, 348; subscribers, 338-339, 348-349; published, 351; described, 352-359; (vols. V-VII, entitled *Sermons by the late Rev. Mr. Sterne*), published, 473-475; plagiarisms, 476-478; notable passages, 478-479; extant manuscripts, 524.
- Sessions Dinner, 158, 162 *n*, 163, 176; in *Tristram Shandy*, 243.
- Seven Letters written by Sterne*, 535.
- Séguin, Mme. de, 286.
- Shakespeare, imitated, 60; quoted, 90; mentioned, 481, 523.
- Shandy*, meaning of the word, 188.
- Shandy Hall, described, 235-236; re-decorated, 422-423; later history, 469; tablet to Sterne, 469.
- Sharp, Dr. Samuel, as "Mundungus" in *Sentimental Journey*, 435 and *n*.
- Sharpe, Rev. Nathan, Sterne's schoolmaster, 22-23, 26.
- Shelburne, Earl of, 332; Sterne at his levee, 393; correspondence with, 420, 433, 438, 439.
- Sherlock, Thomas, Bishop of London, 224, 237.
- Shuter, Edward, actor, 393.
- Skelton Castle, described, 120-121; Sterne's last visit to, 425. *See* Stevenson, John Hall.
- Sligniac, M., of Toulouse, 308.
- Smellie, Dr. William, 78, 80 and *n*, 140.
- Smollett, Tobias, *Humphry Clinker*, 126; *Travels through France and Italy*, 304, 319-320, 377, 379; meets Sterne, 319-320, 380; as "Smelfungus" in *Sentimental Journey*, 435-436, 447. *See also* *Critical Review*.
- Sommery, Mlle. de, on *Sentimental Journey*, 454.
- Southwell, Lord, 391.
- Spence, Joseph, *Crito*, 213 and *n*.
- Spencer, John, first Viscount, friendship with Sterne, 248-249; dedication of *Tristram Shandy* (V-VI), 264, 265-266, 268, 525, 532; in Duke of York's set, 394; presents Sterne with a silver standish, 420, 517 and *n*.
- Spencer, Dr. John, *De Legibus*, 138.
- Stables, William, of York, 157, 158; in *A Political Romance*, 165.
- Stanhope, ———, Consul of Algiers, 299.
- Stanhope, Charles, 206.
- Stanhope, Sir William, 122, 439.
- Stanhope, Lady Anne, 395.
- Stanislas I., King of Poland, 274.
- Stanley, Edward, friend of Sterne, 331 *n*.
- Stapfer, Paul, *Laurence Sterne*, 110; "unpublished fragment" by Sterne, 144 and *n*, 145; records at Albi, 489 *n*.
- Stapleford, the Sternes of, 4.
- Stapleton, Sir Miles, 75.
- Steele, Christopher, portrait of Sterne, 110.
- Steele, Richard, 11, 407; *Christian Hero*, 227.
- Stern, Lewis, painter, 111 and *n*.
- Sterne, surname of, 4; early family-seats, 4; pedigrees, 11 *n*.
- Sterne, Agnes, mother of Laurence, marriage, 13; children and hardships, 13-16; at Clonmel, 16, 25, 94, 97; at York, alleged neglect by son, vindication, 94-103 and *n*; reconciliation, 117; death, 183-184.
- Sterne, Catherine, sister of Laurence, 15, 16, 25; quarrel with brother, 94-103.
- Sterne, Dorothy, first wife of Richard Sterne of Halifax, 10.
- Sterne, Elizabeth, wife of the Archbishop, 8.
- Sterne, Elizabeth, wife of Laurence, appearance, 43, 110; marriage, 42-43, 44, 45-49; fortune, 50, 101; attack of insanity, 184-185, 207, 233, 521; coolness towards husband, 257; reconciliation, 260; joins husband in France, 293-307; remains abroad with daughter, 323; rumours

- of separation from husband, 333; visit from husband, 383-384; serious illness, 387; settles at Avignon, 391; hears of Sterne's infatuation for Mrs. Draper, 428; return to Coxwold, 430-432; plans for a separate maintenance, 429, 431-432; illness and hallucinations, 457; administration of husband's estate, 470-472; purses for her benefit, 471, 488; publishes posthumous *Sermons*, 473-475; retires to Angoulême, 481; death at Albi, 489.
- Sterne, Esther, second wife of Richard Sterne of Halifax, 10.
- Sterne, Jaques, uncle of Laurence, birth, 11; ecclesiastical appointments, 37, 68, 84; church-politician, 38 and *n*, 69; aids Laurence, 38; pursuit of Roman Catholics and Jacobites, 70-71, 74-78; letters to the Duke of Newcastle, 83-84; quarrel with Laurence, 87-103; death and will, 184 and *n*.
- Sterne, John, founder of Irish College of Physicians, 4.
- Sterne, John, Bishop of Clogher, son of the preceding, 4.
- Sterne, Laurence: ancestry, 3-11; father, 11-16; mother, 13-16; birth, 13, 16; baptismal name, 16-17; childhood, brothers and sisters, 13-17; school, 18-25; love for military books, 24-25; Cambridge, 26-34; tutors, 27; associates, 27-28; reading, and burlesque of curriculum, 29-33; degrees, 33; portrait by Ramsay, 34; first hemorrhage, 34, entries concerning Sterne in register of Jesus College, 34-35 and *n*; ordained deacon, 36; curate of St. Ives, 36-37; aided by uncle Jaques, 38; ordained priest, 38-39; Vicar of Sutton-on-Forest, 39 and *n*; entries in parish book, 40, 50-52; Prebendary of Givendale, 40; life at York, 41-42; courtship and marriage, 42-49; love letters, 46-49; Prebendary of North Newbald, 52; Vicar of Stillington, 52-54; continental tour, 54-55; farming and purchases of land, 55-59, 115; as Parson Yorick, 59-63; relations with Philip Harland, 63-65; relations with Stephen Croft, 65-66; associated with uncle Jaques in politics, 69, 71, 72; paragraph-writer, 72-74, 77-78; caricatures Dr. Burton in *Tristram Shandy*, 80-81; violent hatred of Church of Rome, 81, 82; two notable sermons, 82, 84-86, 530-531; persecuted by uncle Jaques, 87-103; cathedral sermons, 88 and *n*, 89; commissaryships, 92-93, 153, 166; alleged neglect of mother and sister, 93-94, 102 and *n*, 103, 517; vindication, 94-102; enclosures at Sutton, 105-106; painting portraits, 107-112; portrait by Bridges, 110; friendship with Rev. John Blake, 112-115; sermon on Herod, 116; anecdote, 117-118; excursions to Skelton Castle with the Demoniacs, 119-129; racing, 124, 425; fiddling, 126-127; jests, 128; facetious Latin epistle, 127-128; library of facetious and military books, 130-144; "unpublished fragment", 144-149; a poem on the *Unknown World*, 149-151; other verse, 129, 151-152, 408; club at York, 153, 173; leases land and tithes, 154; his part in quarrel between Dean Fountayne and Dr. Topham, 155, 157-159, 163, 176-177; Sessions Dinner, 158, 163, 243, 244; *A Political Romance*, 164-169; *Key* to same, 169-173; appended letters, 174-176; Topham silenced, 177; *Romance* suppressed, 177; sketch of himself in the *Romance*, 166, 170-171, 172, 173; *Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II) composed, 178-181, published, 181-183; death of mother, 183-184; death of uncle Jaques, 184; illness of wife and daughter, 185; flirtation with Miss Fourmantelle, 185-187, 196, 199, 203-204; depicts himself, 188, 190; reception in London, 194-209; his apartments, 198; agreements with Dodsley, 195, 208; appointed to Coxwold, 200; portrait by Reynolds, 201 and *n*; second edition of *Tristram Shandy*, 202-203; sketch of Sterne in newspapers, 204; anecdote, 206; visit to Windsor, 207-208; attacked and burlesqued, 210-220; *Sermons* (vols. I-II), published, 220-222; reception of, 222-225; borrowings, 225-227; described, 227-232; business at York and Sutton, 233-235; settlement at Coxwold, 235-237; correspondence with Warburton, 237-238; composition and contents of *Tristram Shandy* (vols. III-IV), 235-245;

retort on his critics, 245-246; second visit to London, 246-256; *Tristram Shandy* (vols. III-IV), published, 250-251; assailed by reviews, 251-253; sermon at Foundling Hospital, 254-256; at Coxwold, 257-258; coronation sermon, 258-259; purchase of books, 259; *clerum*, 259; *Tristram Shandy* (vols. V-VI), 259-265; London visit, 264 *et seq.*; meets Dr. Johnson, 265-266; changes publisher, 266-267; reviews, 267-268; illness, 268; reported dead, 269-270; journey to Paris, 268, 271-272; reception, 272-292; his Boswell, 279-281; explains his personality, 281-282; portrait by Carmontelle, 288-289; illness, 289-290; Dutens's story, 290-292; prepares to settle at Toulouse, 293-294; wife and daughter summoned, 294-298; anecdote, 298-299; illness, 299; journey to Toulouse via Auxerre, Lyons, Avignon, and Montpellier, 300-307; sojourn at Toulouse, 308-312; writing *Tristram Shandy* and revising sermons, 310, 312-313; illness, 310; financial distress, 312, 314-315; trip to Bagnères, 313, 314, 316; sojourn at Montpellier, 316-323; meets Smollett, 319-320; illness, 321-322; returns to Paris, 323-326; sermon at English embassy, 326-327; clash with Hume, 327-328; return to England, 330; sits again to Reynolds, 331; York races, 331-332; at Scarborough, 332; *Tristram Shandy* (vols. VII-VIII), published, 334, assailed, 335-336; laments absence of Garrick, 337-338; subscribers to forthcoming *Sermons*, 338, 339; trip to Bath, 339 *et seq.*; friendship with Mrs. Vesey, 340-341; sits to Gainsborough, 341; at Lady Lepell's, 341; letter to Lady Percy, 342-343 and *n.*; at Shandy Hall, preparing sermons for press, 344, 348; parsonage at Sutton burned, 345-346; hemorrhages, 344, 347; York races, 347-348; meets Miss Graeme, 348; amusing letters, 345, 349; subscribers to *Sermons* (vols. III-IV), 350, published, 351, described, 351-359; journey through France and Italy, 361 *et seq.*; preparation for, 338, 350; relation of the tour to the *Sentimental Journey*, 360 *et seq.*; Sterne's appearance,

360-361; Calais, 361-365; Montreuil, 365-367; La Fleur, 366-367 *et seq.*; Paris, 367-372; anecdote, 371-372; poor Maria, 372-374; vintage dance, 374-375; Lyons, 375; Pont-de-Beauvoisin, 375-376; mountain-passes, 376; Turin, 377; Milan, 378-379; Florence, 379; Rome, 379-380; a winter at Naples, 380-381; Rome again, 381; bust by Nollekens, 381; journey home, 381-382 *et seq.*; visit to his wife, 383-384; Paris, 384; London, 384; return to Shandy Hall, depressed, 386; worried by illness of wife in France, 387; enclosure of Stillington Common, 387, 390; correspondence with Ignatius Sancho, 387-388; last sermon in York Cathedral, 388-389; last vol. of *Tristram Shandy* written, 389-390; recovery of Mrs. Sterne, 390-391; visit to London, 392 *et seq.*; lodgings, 392; levees and dinners, 393; meets Arthur Lee and Franklin, 393-394; attentions of the Duke of York, 394; friendship with Commodore James and his wife, 395-396; attends Mrs. Cornelys's assembly, 397-398; publication of *Tristram Shandy* (vol. IX), 398; its reception, 399-401; assailed in an anonymous letter to his archbishop, 399-400; subscribers for *Sentimental Journey*, 401-402; friendship with Mrs. Draper, 403 *et seq.*; first meeting, 406; present of *Sermons* and *Tristram Shandy*, 406; excursions together, 407; Mrs. Draper's letters and portrait, 407; Sterne's elegy, 408; offers his protection, 409-410; separation, 410-411; Sterne's account of the infatuation, 412; *Journal to Eliza*, 412-415 *et seq.*, 433-435; serious illness, 416-418; flirtation with Sheba, 419; journey home, 420-421; summer at Coxwold, 421-422; intrusion of Mrs. Draper's image, 422-424, 427, 437-438; letter to Daniel Draper, 424-425; visits to Skelton Castle and Harrogate, 425; letter from Mrs. Draper, 425-426; visit to Scarborough, 426-427; offers of preferment, 426-427; return of wife and daughter, 428-432; *Sentimental Journey*, composed, 433-439; alterations in MS., 445-450; published, 450-451; praised at home and abroad, 452-455; severe hemor-

- rhages, 438; last journey to London, 438-439; lodgings crowded with friends, 442; associations with George Selwyn, 442-443; a walking-stick from Dr. Eustace of South Carolina, 443-444; last illness, 456 *et seq.*; attentions of Beauclerk, 456, Lord Ossory, 456, Commodore James, 458, 460, Reynolds, 460, and others, 458, 461; last letter to Lydia, 457-458; last letter to Mrs. James, 458-459; death, 459-461; announcement, 461-462; Lessing's remark, 462, 512; funeral, 462-463; body stolen from grave, 463-465; inscriptions on tomb, 466-468; tablet at Shandy Hall, 469; administration of his goods, 470-472; debts liquidated by friends, 471; library, 471 *n*; MSS., 472-473 and *n*, 487; posthumous *Sermons*, 473-479; *Sentimental Journey*, continued by Hall-Stevenson, 479-480; projected biography, 480-484; publication of correspondence and memoirs, 490-495; final sale of lands at Sutton, 490; Sterne's last descendant, 495; Mrs. Draper's last words upon Sterne, 497; his ghost, 510; summary, 511 *et seq.*; friendships, 511-512; conversation, 512, 520; appearance and eyes, 513-514; fame, 514; zest for life, 515; paganism, 515-516; virtues and vices, 516; punctual in appointments, 516-517; sincerity, 518; volatile temperament, 518-519; relations with women, 519-520; humour, 520-523; extant MSS, 524-530; authentic works, 530-537.
- Sterne, Lydia, daughter of Laurence, birth, 59; at school, 185, 207; prank, 233; her father's amanuensis, 260; illness, 289; accompanies mother to southern France, 293-307; remains with mother, 323; her father's tender letter from Paris, 329; proposal of marriage, 345; life at Avignon, 391; returns home with mother, 430-432; her father's last letter, 457-458; publication of his *Sermons*, 473-475; her part in projected biography of her father, 480-484; at Angoulême, 481-482; her marriage at Albi, 488-489 and *n*; death of husband, 490; visit to London and publication of her father's correspondence, 490-495, 534-535; death at Albi, 495; *also* 380, 407, 408, 413, 471, 505.
- Sterne, Margery, wife of Simon Sterne of Mansfield, 4.
- Sterne, Mary, wife of Simon Sterne of Halifax, 10.
- Sterne, Richard, Archbishop of York, great-grandfather of Laurence, career, 5-8 and *n*, 26.
- Sterne, Richard, of Elvington, cousin of Laurence, 25-26; his allowance to Laurence for Cambridge, 26, 27, 34, 37.
- Sterne, Richard, of Halifax, uncle of Laurence, 10-11; takes charge of Laurence's education at school, 18, 34; interest in local grammar schools, 21, 22; death, 11, 25.
- Sterne, Richard, of Kilvington, eldest son of Archbishop Sterne, 8-9.
- Sterne, Roger, father of Laurence, career and character, 11-16, 514.
- Sterne, Simon, of Mansfield, ancestor of Laurence, 4.
- Sterne, Simon, of Halifax, third son of the archbishop and grandfather of Laurence, 9, 10.
- Sterne, Timothy, cousin of Laurence, 25-26.
- Sterne, William, of Cropwell-Butler, ancestor of Laurence, 4.
- Sterne, William, of Mansfield, second son of the Archbishop, 9.
- Stevenson, John Hall, at Jesus College, 28-29; as Eugenius in *Tristram Shandy*, 62, 128, 189, 271; continental tour, 118; marriage, 118; inherits Skelton Castle, 119; library, 119, 130; *Crazy Tales*, 120, 128-129, 299, 309, 310; appearance and character, 119 *n*, 121-122; Sterne and the Demoniacs, 122-129; *Lyric Epistles*, 211; visits and trips with Sterne, 331-332, 425; sup together in London, 384, 416; absent at Sterne's death, 463; rumour about Sterne's body, 464 and *n*; raises purse for widow and daughter, 471; his continuation of *Sentimental Journey*, 480; projected *Life* of Sterne, 480-484; *also* 382, 387, 420, 429, 473, 493, 522, 526, 533.
- Stevinus, *Nouvelle Manière de Fortification*, 142, 143.
- Stillington, Sterne appointed Vicar of, 52-54; Enclosure Act, 333 and *n*, 387, 390.

- Stormont, seventh Viscount, ambassador at Vienna, 382.
- Stothard, Thomas, painter, 60.
- Stow-cum-Quy, the Sternes of, 4.
- Strahan, William, publisher, 474.
- Stratton, George, of Bombay, 410.
- Suard, Jean Baptiste, reviews *Tristram Shandy*, 276, 335, 336; his career, 279-280; admiration for Sterne, 280-282 and *n*, 287, 511-512; *also* 324.
- Suard, Mme. (wife of J. B. Suard), 279, 280; on *Sentimental Journey*, 454, 455 *n*.
- Suckling, Sir John, 270.
- Sukey Shandy, Miss*, 214.
- Sunton's Coffee-House, York, Sterne's resort, 41, 153, 173, 184.
- Supplement to * * * Tristram Shandy*, A, 215.
- Sutton-on-the-Forest, Sterne's parish, described, 39-40, 59; settlement at, 50; parish registry, 40, 50-52, 59; Enclosure Act, 105-106 and *n*, 234-235, 490.
- Swift, Jonathan, *Tale of the Tub*, 134, 136, 169, 213, 399; Swift and Stella, 45, 403; *also* 4, 179, 523.
- Symonds, John, with Sterne in Italy, 380, 381, 528.
- Synopsis Communium Locorum*, Sterne's exercise-book at school, 23.
- Tacitus, Sterne's opinion of, 29.
- Talbot, William, first Earl, 248.
- Tartaglia, *Quesiti ed Invenzioni Di-verse*, 142.
- Tavistock, Francis Russell, Marquis of, 290, 291, 325.
- Taylor, Jeremy, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, 144.
- Temple, Richard, second Earl, 207.
- Tenison, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Baconiana*, 138.
- Textus Roffensis*, *see* Ernulf.
- Thackeray, quoted or referred to, 134, 362, 453, 513, 519; on Sterne and Dutens, 292; on Sterne and Lady Percy, 343 *n*; on the flirtation with Mrs. Draper, 414 and *n*.
- Thayer, H. W., *Sterne in Germany*, 446 *n*, 454 *n*.
- Theocritus, Sterne's opinion of, 29.
- Thicknesse, Philip, on M. Dessein, 362 and *n*.
- Thirty-Fourth, or Cumberland Regiment of Foot, its colonels and Roger Sterne's service in, 11-16; history of, 12 *n*; Laurence Sterne's memories of, 17.
- Thompson, George, of York, 79 and *n*.
- Thoresby, Ralph, *Diary*, 9 and *n*.
- Thornhill, Thomas, of London, 297, 298, 302, 320; Sterne with him at Paris, 323; Sterne his guest in London, 330, 331.
- Thrale, Mrs., *see* Piozzi, Mrs.
- Tillotson, John, Archbishop of Canterbury, sermons, 144, 224, 225, 227, 229, 353.
- Times of India*, 503 *n*.
- Todd, John, York bookseller, 131.
- Tollet, M., of Geneva, on Sterne, 283 and *n*, 320-321; Sterne his guest in Paris, 323; goes to England with Sterne, 330, 331.
- Tooke, John Horne, with Sterne at Lyons, 375 and *n*.
- Topham, Edward (son of Francis), 161.
- Topham, Dr. Francis, of York, 91, 93; offices, 155-156; quarrel with Dean Fountayne and Sterne, 156-164; pamphlets in the quarrel, 163; silenced by Sterne in *A Political Romance*, 164-177; introduced into *Tristram Shandy*, 189, 244; grants letters for administration of Sterne's goods, 470.
- Torricelli, 143.
- Toulouse, Sterne's life at, 308-315.
- Townshend, Charles, 248.
- Trail, Dr. James, 326.
- Translations of Sterne's works, 453-455.
- Tristram Shandy* (vols. I-II), composition, 178-181; publication, 181-183; local interest in the book, 187-189; contents, 190-192; first reviews, 192-193; defended against criticism, 179, 193-194 and *n*; reception in London, 195; second edition, 195, 201-203, 208; third and fourth editions, 203; attacked and burlesqued, 211-215; as viewed by literary men, 216-218, by moralists, 218-220; (vols. III-IV) composed, 235-237, 246; contents, 238-246; published, 250-251; attacked, 250, 251-253; (vols. V-VI), 259-264; published by Becket, 265-266; dedication, 265; praised, 267-268, 269; sale, 295-296, 312; (vols. VII-VIII) begun at Toulouse, 310-311, 312-313; design,

- 314, 435; completed, 333-334, published, 334-335; reception, 335-337; (vol. IX) written, 388, 389-390; published, 398; dedication, 399; reprobated by moralists, 399-400; eloquence, 401; Sterne's last words on *Tristram Shandy*, 443-444; extant manuscripts, 524-525; first editions, 531-533; imitations, 213-214, 215, 254, 264, 265, 267.
- Tristram Shandy*, *A Third Volume of*, by John Carr, 215.
- Tristram Shandy at Ranelagh*, 214.
- Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*, 214.
- Trotter, Lawson, of Skelton, Jacobite, 118, 299, 324, 325.
- Turner, Charles, of Kirkleatham, 320, 332, 425.
- Turner, Cholmley, 38, 75.
- Turney, John, of Leek Wotton, quoted, 19
- Tutors of Sterne, 27.
- Universal Register*, 219 n.
- Unknown World, The*, 149-151, 152, 536.
- Unpublished Fragment*, 144-149, 537.
- Unpublished Letters of L. Sterne*, 535.
- Upper Ossory, second Earl of, requests Reynolds to paint Sterne, 201; in Paris with Sterne, 371; later friendship, 393; friend of the Jameses, 406; announces Sterne's death, 461.
- Vallis Eboracensis*, see Gill, Thomas.
- Van Coehorn, *Nouvelle Manière de Fortifier les Places*, 142.
- Vanbrugh and Cibber's *Journey to London*, recast by Sterne, 312.
- Vansittart, Robert, 249, 250.
- Varennes, M., 365, 366.
- Vauban, Prestre de, *De l'Attaque et de la Defense des Places*, 142.
- Vence, Mme. de, 286, 287.
- Vergil, Sterne's fondness for, 24, 29.
- Vesey, Mrs. Elizabeth, Sterne's friendship with, 339-341, 426, 519, 527, 534, 535.
- Ville, Chevalier de, *Les Fortifications*, 142.
- Voltaire, *Candide*, 144; praise of Sterne's Sermon on Conscience, 276, 277, 518-519; Sterne's projected visit to, 323; *Olympie*, 324; subscribes to *Sermons*, 350.
- Walker, Abraham, pilot, 411.
- Walker, Rev. John, Vicar of Sutton, 50.
- Waller, Edmund, 403.
- Walpole, Horace, on Sterne's neglect of mother, 102; on *Tristram Shandy*, 195, 216-217 and n, 251; on Sterne's dullness, 371; on *Sentimental Journey*, 452; receives news of Sterne's death, 461; entertained by his letters, 493; also 67, 119, 198, 207, 278, 325, 379 and n, 395 and n.
- Wanly (Wanley), Rev. Francis, Preb. of York, 227 n, 524.
- Warburton, William, friendship with Sterne, 196-198; purse of guineas, 197, 207, 210-211; correspondence with Sterne, 212, 237-238, 493; repudiates Sterne, 248 and n, 249, 267 and n, 511; in *Tristram Shandy*, 251, 267, 399; edition of Pope, 279.
- Ward, Cæsar, York printer, 73, 131, 174, 182, 530, 531.
- Ward, Dr. William, of York, 156, 157, 158, 159.
- Watson, Rev. Daniel, letter on Sterne, 103 n.
- Watts-Dunton, Theodore, on Sterne, 522.
- Welsh, Col. James, *Reminiscences*, 509.
- West, Benjamin, painter, 456.
- Wharton, Thomas, 203, 216 and n.
- Whatley, George, 102 n, 254-255 and n, 536.
- Whitefoord Papers*, anecdotes of Sterne, 43 n, 177 n, 463 n. See Croft, John.
- Whitehead, Paul, 122
- Whitehead, William, 222.
- Whitehill, Mrs., aunt of Mrs. Draper, 410.
- Whitehill, Thomas, uncle of Mrs. Draper, 503-505.
- Wilford, Miss, dancer, 343 and n.
- Wilkes, John, 122, 123, 222, 249, 362 n, 394, 471 and n, 474, 530; with Sterne in Paris, 323-324 and n, 370, 371; coolness between them, 474; project for biography of Sterne, 480-484; acquaintance with Mrs. Draper, 506-507, 508.
- Wilkinson, Richard, curate, 40, 51, 54, 92, 200.
- Wilkinson, Tate, actor, 42, 43.
- Williams, George James ("Gilly"), 392.
- Willis's Current Notes*, 208 n, 465 n, 471 n.
- Wilmot, Sir Edward, 194.
- Winchelsea, Earl of, 199.

- Wodhull, Michael, 111.
- Wollaston, William, Sterne's borrowings from, 227 and *n*, 478.
- Woodhouse, ———, 311, 344-345.
- Woodhouse, George, of York, 158, 244.
- Wordsworth, Christopher, 32 *n*.
- Works of Sterne, *see* the Appendix.
- Worthington, Dr. William, Preb. of York, 468.
- Wright, Miss, 343 *n*.
- Wycherley, William, plays, 29.
- Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, 261.
- Yorick, the name assumed by Sterne, 3, 55; as depicted in *Tristram Shandy*, 59-63, 104, 242, 243, 260.
- Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued*, 480.
- York, Edward Augustus, Duke of, attentions to Sterne, 207, 394-395, 402; present at Sterne's last sermon, 389.
- York Courant*, quoted or cited, 41 *n*, 42 *n*, 63 *n*, 64 *n*, 71 *n*, 73, 74, 75, 113, 155, 157 *n*, 468 *n*, 471 *n*.
- York Journal or Protestant Courant*, Sterne's contributions to, 73, 77.
- Young, Edward, Dean of Salisbury, sermons, 144, 225.

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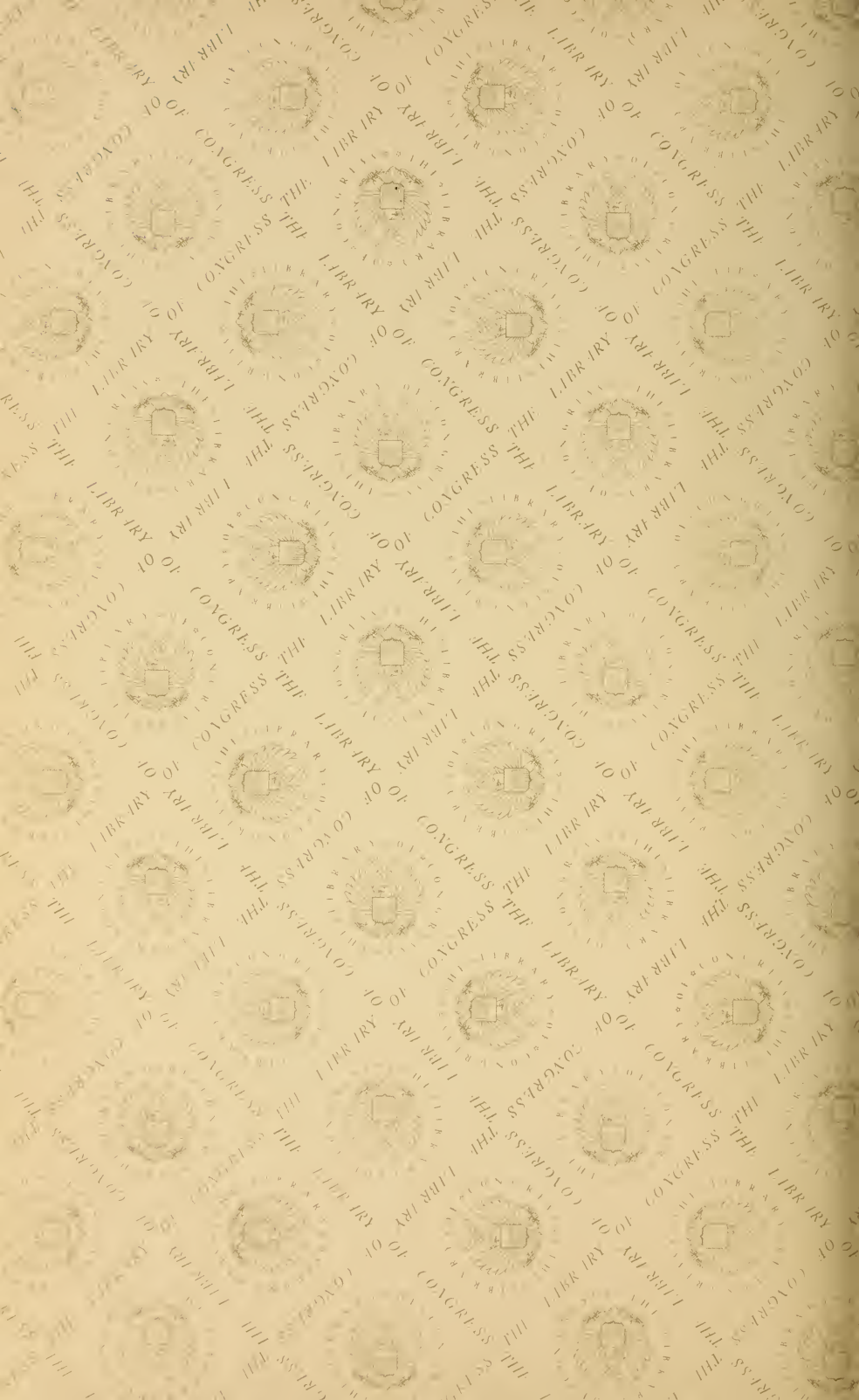
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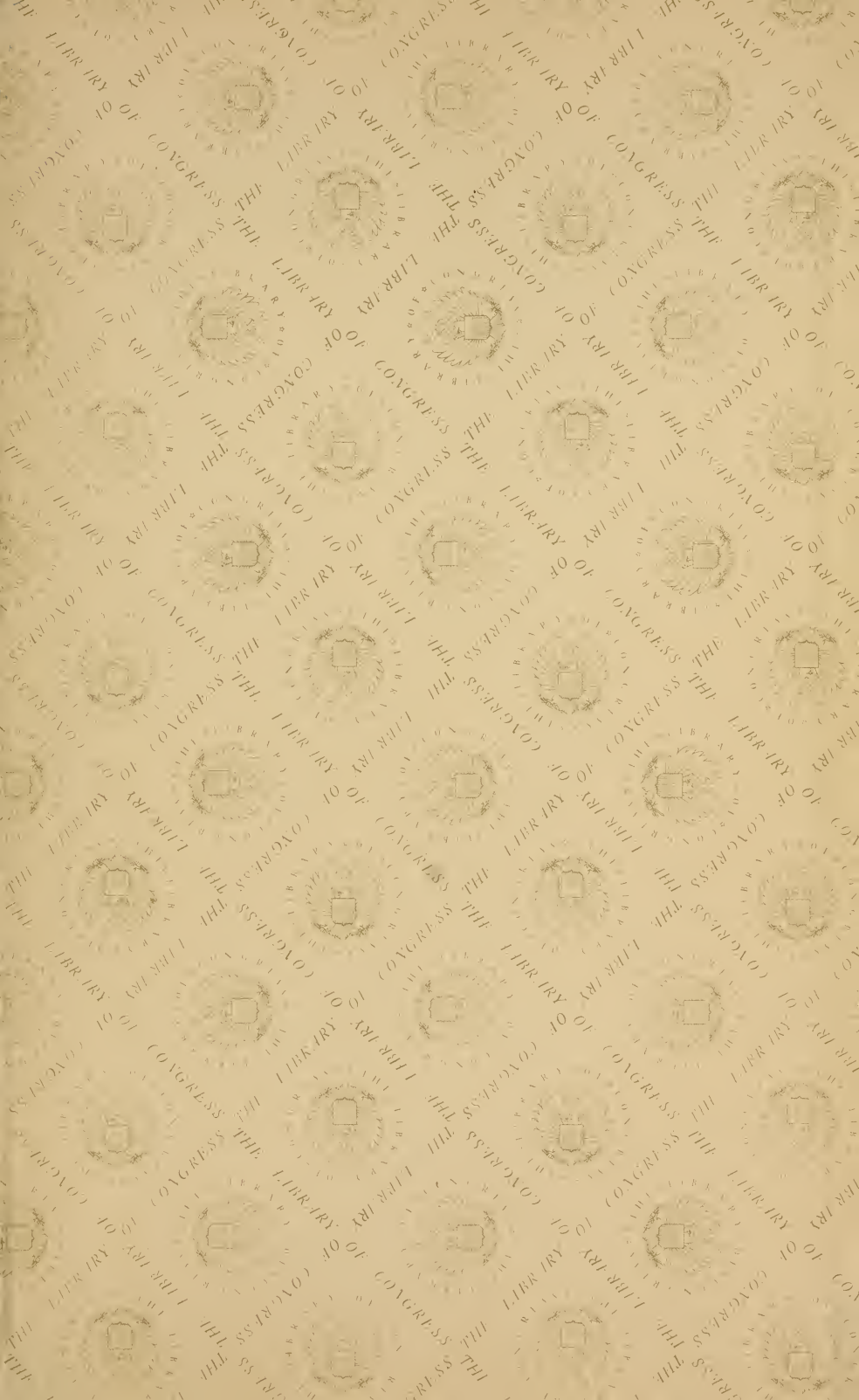
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